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Friday June 19 1998

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G2 with European weather



Jonathan Steele

We must rescue the oppressed

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Doctors pay the price



James Wisheart outside the General Medical Council yesterday. His solicitor said he had 'done his best but had been found wanting in his mission to save life' PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Public inquiry into baby deaths

Sarah Boseley
Health Correspondent

A PUBLIC inquiry into the Bristol babies case was announced by the Government last night, as two eminent doctors were struck off the medical register following an unprecedented disciplinary inquiry which sent shockwaves through the medical profession and triggered major reforms to make doctors more accountable.

James Wisheart, a senior children's heart surgeon and former medical director of the United Bristol Healthcare Trust, and John Roylance, the chief executive, betrayed the trust of patients, the General Medical Council said yesterday, and they must pay the penalty in spite of their high standing, good intentions and integrity.

"At the centre of this inquiry is the trust that patients place in their doctors," said Sir Donald Irvine, GMC president, announcing the rulings. But parents whose children died in heart operations at the Bristol Royal Infirmary were far from satisfied. There were angry and distressing scenes as the third doctor, Janardan Dhasmana, walked away free to operate on adult patients, having been banned from children's heart operations for three years.

"The GMC protects working doctors," shouted Steven Willis, whose son Daniel died in a heart operation carried out by Mr Dhasmana. "He is the only one who is working, and you let him carry on." Both Mr Wisheart and Dr Roylance have retired.

"Our children's blood is on your hands. How can you live with yourself, Mr Dhasmana?" cried a mother.

Mr Dhasmana's solicitor, Ralph Shipway, expressed the surgeon's "deep regret" over the deaths and his appreciation of support he had received from hundreds of former patients.

> 'Our children's blood is on your hands. How can you live with yourself?'
>
> **Mother**

Mr Wisheart's solicitor, Robert Sumerling, said: "James Wisheart's distress at today's decision is nothing compared with the death of just one of the children he set out to save, and those parents will never overcome their loss. He did his best, but he has been found wanting by the committee in his mission to save and improve life."

Shortly after the sentences were passed, the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, speaking in the House of Commons, announced the public inquiry that the parents have been demanding. It will look into every aspect of what happened at the Bristol Royal Infirmary in the early 1990s.

The parents have been upset that the GMC limited its inquiry to 29 out of 53 children who died and ruled out all cases of brain damage.

The GMC acknowledged the need to look far more closely at what happened at Bristol. Sir Donald said they were concerned by "evidence suggesting institutional failures at the BRI and beyond".

The inquiry will have to investigate the conduct of other medical staff at Bristol, including GPs and anaesthetists who referred children to the surgeons or participated in operations, and the role of the Department of Health.

Mr Dobson has already had three meetings with the parents. "We owe it to them to ensure that this public inquiry gets to the bottom of what went wrong in Bristol — that all the facts are exposed and responsibility is identified," he said. The inquiry is to be chaired by Ian Kennedy, professor of health law, ethics and policy at University College London. Announcing the

turn to page 2, column 8

Did you kill? The banned question

David Pallister

A HIGH COURT judge yesterday pointedly remarked that the five unconvicted suspects in the Stephen Lawrence murder were not "clamouring to clear their names" as he ordered them to give evidence to the public inquiry but ruled that they could not be asked questions about their guilt or innocence.

"Their rights must be respected," said Lord Justice Simon Brown. But in his ruling rejecting the men's application for a judicial review of the summonses ordering them to appear, the judge made it plain where his sympathies lay.

Stephen's parents, Neville and Doreen Lawrence, were in the packed courtroom as the judge, sitting with Mr Justice Hooper, said: "The temptation to use these applicants' appearance as witnesses to explore in depth their involvement in the murder, acute though that is given one's profound lack of sympathy, must be firmly resisted.

"If they were innocent they would be clamouring for the chance to proclaim their innocence and clear their names. That is not their position. Their rights must be respected. They would simply deny involvement in Stephen's murder as they have done in written statements. It may be doubted in any event that their evidence would be of much value."

Mr Lawrence said later that he was happy with the judgment.

When the five appear before the inquiry on Monday week, it will be the first time they have been required to give evidence about the events after Stephen's racist murder in Eltham, south London, in 1993.

The five — David Norris, 21, Neil Acourt, 22, his brother Jamie Acourt, 21, Luke Knight, 20, and Gary Dobson, 22 — have all at various times been charged with the murder. Neil Acourt, Dobson and Knight were acquitted at the Old Bailey in 1996. The charges against Jamie Acourt and Norris never came to trial so they remain at risk of prosecution.

At the inquest into Stephen's death last year they refused to answer questions, claiming common law privilege not to incriminate themselves. If they refuse to answer questions at the inquiry they could be jailed for up to six months for contempt. They could also be prosecuted for perjury if it is proved they have told lies.

In his judgment yesterday Lord Justice Simon Brown adopted the arguments of the five men's counsel, Charles Conway. The judge said: "Whilst the inquiry involves in a real sense a trial of the police who investigated this crime, it is in no sense a trial of these applicants and it must not be allowed to become one."

The judge said other questions could be put at the "absolute discretion" of the inquiry chairman, Sir William Macpherson of Cluny.

He has already asserted that the purpose of the inquiry is not to name the killers, but he has indicted that he will identify them if he is sure on the balance of probabilities.

The judge agreed with Michael Mansfield, the family's QC, that there were questions which could properly be put. These were to help reveal whether the "admitted police failures" in the Lawrence investigation were due to "racism, incompetence, collusion or corruption". Stephen, who was black, was stabbed by a group of white youths.

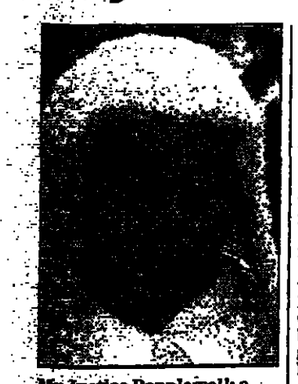
In a forthright and at times prickly judgment Lord Justice Simon Brown described arguments originally advanced by Edmund Lawson, QC for the inquiry, as "fallacious" and "absurd".

He said he utterly rejected Mr Lawson's proposal to invite the inquiry to resolve the question: "Yes or no — are the applicants guilty?"

Earlier Mr Conway agreed that the five were "plainly going to be called" to the inquiry and that he was not arguing that no questions at all could properly be put to them.

But he argued that questions in the inquiry's prepared schedule were "irrelevant" and outside the inquiry's terms of reference. "It is plain that the intention or the effect of the proposed questions is to re-try all these applicants for murder."

Mystified judge lifts the lid on the legend of Linford's lunchbox



Mr Justice Popplewell: a point of clarification

Sarah Hall

IT IS the piece of his anatomy for which Linford Christie is best-known; the subject of widespread male envy, and the butt of endless jokes.

But, yesterday, the international renown of "Linford's lunchbox" appeared to have escaped a senior member of the judiciary.

"What is Linford Christie's lunchbox?" Mr Justice Popplewell (Charterhouse; Queens' College, Cambridge) asked the Olympic gold medallist in bemusement.

"They are making a reference to my genitals your honour," replied the agitated athlete. "I think it's disgusting."

The exchange came during the second day of a libel action in the High Court between Christie and former armed robber John McVicar, who alleged in an article that his international sporting success was due to illegal, performance-enhancing drugs.

The allegations — in the now-defunct satirical magazine, Spiked, in September 1995 — centred on Christie's late development from "beanpole sprinter" to "powerhouse". The printers, Wiltshire (Bristol) Ltd, and distributors Johnson's News Ltd and W H Smith Ltd, are also being sued.

Yesterday, as the two men came face-to-face, following McVicar's dismissal of his solicitor and his decision to defend himself, the sprinter enlived the normally genteel surroundings of court 13 with an outburst against the press for their preoccupation with the size of his manhood.

"They talk about Linford Christie's lunchbox. I do not like that. I think it's a stereotype. The more you tell them you don't like it the more they print it," said the former champion athlete, straight-faced.

It was at this point that the baffled judge — a 70-year-old father-of-four — intervened to question his terminology.

His definition given, Christie warmed to his theme. The jokes were tantamount to sexual discrimination, he argued. "No one ever mentions Sally Gunnell's tits or anything like that. It's sexual discrimination. It's totally disgusting."

He continued: "I do not make a joke about it, because I do not think it is a joke."

McVicar responded: "You market bananas."

Christie retorted: "That's nothing to do with Linford Christie's lunchbox. I have had many occasions when people asked me to make lunchboxes and call it a Linford Christie lunchbox."

McVicar, who became Britain's most-wanted man after his 1968 break-out from Durham jail, then claimed he had seen Britain's greatest athlete joke about this part of anatomy, by responding to a question about its size with the retort: "If your girlfriend saw how big it was she would leave you."

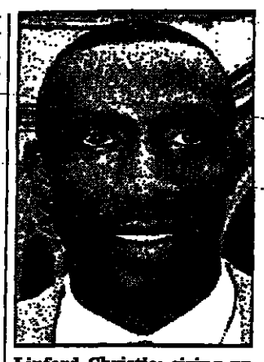
Christie replied: "I have tried to laugh if off. I think if I make a joke of it they might go away."

The athlete, from Twickenham, west London, then enthralled the jury by adding: "People ask me how big is your dick and I say this big" — and stretched his arms out to their full extent.

The judge intervened to bring proceedings back to the drug-taking allegations at the heart of the case.

Christie, who repeatedly denied using banned substances, insisted he was willing to be tested any time. But he revealed his coyness. "I will give a sample but I don't like the process of how they take them. I do not like stripping my clothes off and having another person ogling my privates," he said.

The case continues.



Linford Christie: sizing up the situation for judge

Inside

Britain
The country's best teachers are to be honoured in a televised awards ceremony intended to elevate the profession's battered morale.
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World News
The Ethiopian prime minister, Meles Zenawi, came under increasing pressure to attack Eritrean forces occupying hundreds of square miles of northern Ethiopia.
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Finance
Water companies face higher bills of at least £5 a year to pay for environmental improvements that will help them sell the industry's sewage sludge.
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The Football Association is to...

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The edible Father's Day card.

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Sketch

£3.60 an hour? Bloomin' luxury!



Simon Hoggart

IN THE circumstances, Margaret Beckett did rather well. She had lost her great cabinet struggle with Gordon Brown, who sat next to her nodding gravely as she made her statement about the National Minimum Wage.

You expected him to mutter: "Aye, that needed saying. If you wanted to keep your job, that is."

In short, Mrs Beckett was in the position of a Middle East hostage forced to video a confession of her crimes.

"We will begin to end the scandal of poverty pay!" she said, to a shout of "Who's this 'we'?" from the Tory benches.

When she got to the part about the differential, i.e. lower, wage for 16-20 year olds (or, "we are mindful of the need to protect the position of young people" as the Government, with its command of the euphemistical paradox prefers to put it), someone yelled: "*Eat* all your words and eat them slowly."

The Tories weren't going to let her forget her embarrassment. The Government's approach, she said, was in a "framework of partnership," and they bawled out with laughter at the very idea.

John Redwood replied. The ambitious Tory spokesman doesn't just mix metaphors, but put them into a cement mixer for half an hour. The minimum wage would "throw petrol on the inflationary flames". Pay rises were "fool's gold". This was, he said, "the Mods and Rockers government", and the minimum wage would prove "as effective as go-faster stripes on a scooter".

The brain cannot download all these images, and flashes up a message: "Not enough memory available. Contact your server help line."

But Mr Redwood charged on, finishing with a flourish: "This is back to the bad old ways, back to the bad old days!", the effect only slightly spoiled by a Labour cry of "And back to your planet!"

Dennis Skinner then baffled everyone by saying that every worker got payments in kind and that tips should not be taken into account when fixing the minimum wage. "Because, if they were, ministers would be in serious trouble."

"I don't have any recollection of being tipped," said Mrs Beckett tartly.

I also didn't know you were supposed to tip the Government. Perhaps it's in the tourist guides.

"It is customary to tip waiters 10 per cent. For Chancellors of the Exchequer, 1 per cent of your tax bill is generally appropriate, though you may, if you are Gavyn Davies, pay as much as 20 per cent for a particularly favourable loophole."

Labour MPs began to bite back. Lynne Jones drew gasps from people who assumed that all Labour women were cringing poodles when she called the proposals "bitterly disappointing". John McAllion was furious about the exclusion of young people.

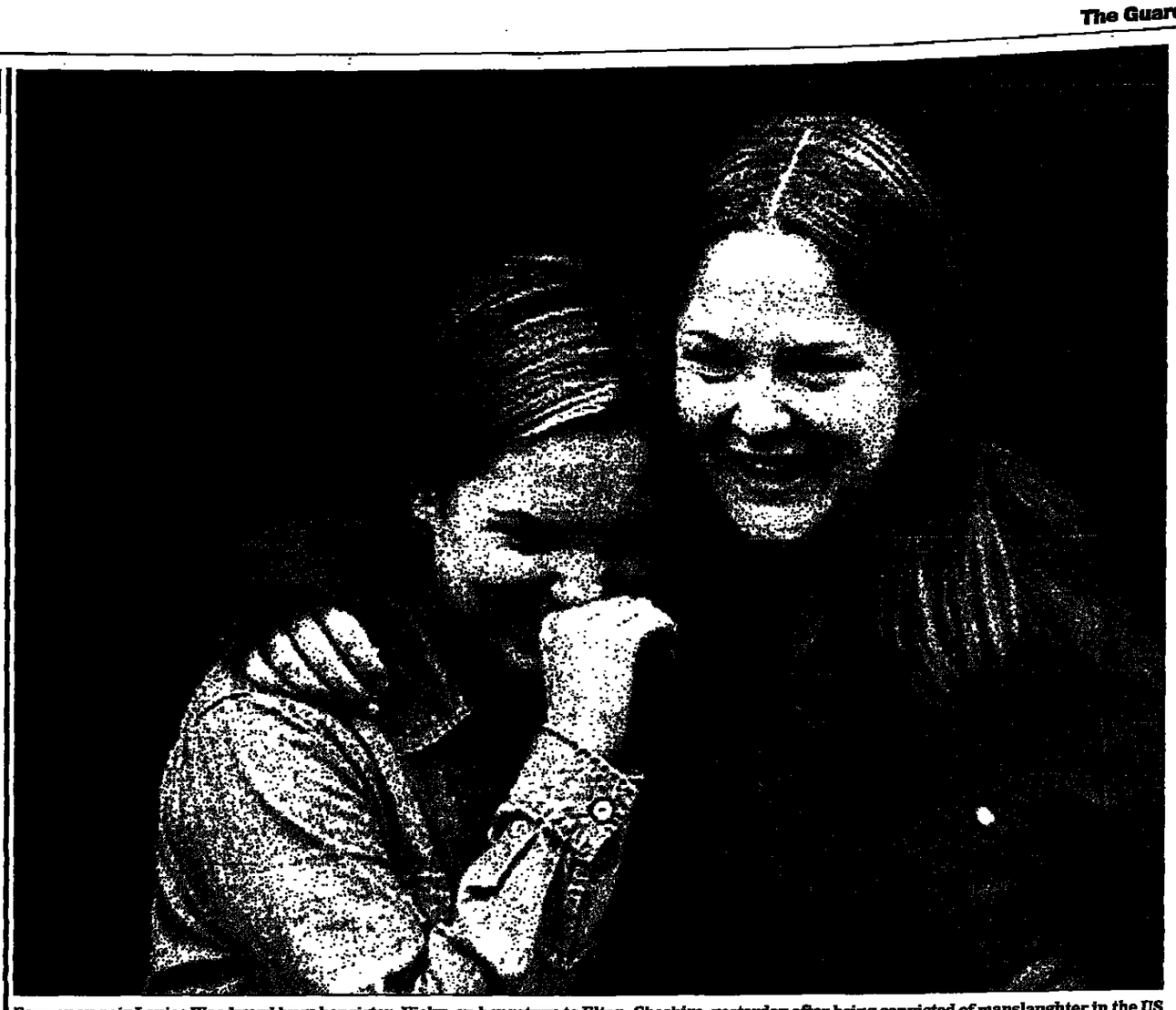
Nicholas Soames wondered whether the minimum wage would be inflation linked. Mrs Beckett was ready. "I see you have seven paid jobs in the Members' Register, *so* I am delighted that you are showing concern about low pay," she shot back. As for Tony Baldry, it was "nauseating" to see him claim to be worried about unemployment "when he could give up *some* of the six jobs he has!"

A curious competitive Three Yorkshiremen sketch began. Chris Mullin cited someone in his constituency paid 89p an hour. Chris Pond, formerly of the Low Pay Unit, said that was nothing: he knew of jobs which paid 49p. Mrs Beckett herself had cited 35p an hour.

No doubt their outrage was genuine. But how far would they go? "35p? Luxury! Ah've got a constituent who earns 7p an hour!"

"Seven pee? That's good money, that is. *We've* lawyers earning 1p a day!"

"They get wages? Listen, in my constituency, the heart surgeons 'ave to pay to work. And they 'ave to work through lunch break an' all, and if they want food they 'ave to eat their own thighs. . ."



Former au pair Louise Woodward hugs her sister, Vicky, on her return to Elton, Cheshire, yesterday after being convicted of manslaughter in the US

'Sue and Gary gave me a wave as they drove past. I felt I wanted to see Louise come home and I wanted to do it quietly. We felt they should be allowed to come home in a dignified way. We were highly criticised last time, so people thought they should let things roll naturally'

Christine Gray, Woodward supporter

Two cheers for Woodward

David Ward

NO ONE can say she returned home in triumph; no one can say she was feted as a heroine. But, as Elton waited for the Woodward motorcade, someone had done his bit to cheer up the entrance to the Cheshire village by scrawling "Free at last. Welcome home Louise" on an envelope and sticking it on a post.

Elton had opted for caution and, wary of previous pictures of champagne and cheering that had winged round the world from the Rigger pub after the US judge reduced to manslaughter Louise Woodward's conviction for killing baby Matthew Eappen, Elton stayed at home.

On the green opposite the pub, new yellow ribbons had been tied to a fence round a tree. From here there was a good view of the road down which Louise would travel.

You couldn't honestly say there was an air of expectation. Judith Cavvan, who lives in a neighbouring town, said: "At the end of the day a child died, so it can't really be a celebration. I'm here, standing in the rain, out of curiosity more than anything. And it will be nice to welcome Louise home."

She'd helped a bit with the supporters' campaign, selling ribbons at work, was grateful for the "huge thank you" Louise had offered at her press conference and relieved to hear she had not sold her story. "I still believe she is totally innocent," she added.

A police motorbike arrived, its flashing blue lights helping to create a sense of occasion. Then a police Land-Rover. And then the one we were waiting for: after an absence of 717 days, Louise Woodward, who had crossed the Atlantic in the first-class cabin of a jumbo jet, rode unsmiling into Elton in the front seat of a minibus.

As the bus turned into Marsh Lane, a lone voice cried: "Keep your chin up Louise. We know you're innocent." The vehicle pulled up outside the Woodwards' detached family home and Louise ran in to hug her 19-year-old sister Vicky and the family dog. Ten minutes later she reappeared in denim jacket, jeans and trainers to smile for a few pictures with her parents, Sue and Gary.

Then she went back in and that was it.

"She wants to go to sleep," explained Andrew Miller, the MP for Ellesmere Port and Neston who had driven her from Heathrow to Manchester and minded her through her press conference.

Louise had put on an accomplished performance before scores of reporters and the stroboscope effect of photographers' flashlights, insisting on her innocence in her transatlantic accent. She was happy to be back on English soil, she was sorry for baby Matthew Eappen's death, she wanted to thank her supporters and lawyers, she hadn't sold her story. And, no, she had no message for the parents of the child she is convicted of killing.

Asked if her life could ever be the same again, she answered simply: "Of course not. How could it be?"

Mr Miller said: "It's been a long haul. Seeing the yellow ribbons and the great public interest in the case has surprised Louise."

He maintained his unswerving loyalty to his constituent and declared: "I have no doubt whatsoever that Louise is a fit and proper person to look after children."

In Elton, Phil Ward, a loyal supporter from Newton-le-Willows, was overcome with emotion as he stood beneath a be-ribboned umbrella. "I just burst into tears of joy, because she's back with her family where she belongs," he said.

At last an Elton resident appeared: Christine Gray, who helped with fundraising. "Sue and Gary looked at me and gave me a wave as they drove past," she said. "I felt I wanted to see Louise come home and I wanted to do it quietly. We felt they should be allowed to come home in a dignified way. We were highly criticised last time, so people thought they should let things roll naturally."

Away from what little action there was, Elton was quiet, except for a burglar alarm going mad in Parklands Drive. No yellow ribbons on homes named Rivendell, Pansea and Sprinbourne in Pinewood Close, but a house in Old Hall Lane was decorated with a black and white cat and a big banner proclaiming "Welcome home Louise xxx".

A bedraggled poster on a lamp post seemed to catch the mood. It advertised a slimming class "where it isn't a sin to be less than perfect".

Au pair blames 'tainted jurors', page 6

Review

Dark pop by son of dirgemeister

Adam Sweeting

Adam Cohen
The Water Rats, King's Cross

BEFORE the show, I had a poke round the Internet, looking for stuff about Adam Cohen. There were a couple of journalists of that name, and some boffin who had won a research fellowship worth oodles of dollars in Blanksville, USA. But of Adam Cohen, singer and songwriter, there was no sign.

That's bound to change pretty soon. Cohen, son of the legendary poet and dirgemeister Leonard, has paid just about enough dues to be ready to pounce on an ill-prepared world.

His first album, ingeniously titled Adam Cohen, will be released by Columbia (his dad's home for the past three decades) in a few weeks. It's a sly, provocative bunch of songs, played and produced with bags of studio expertise, but full of weird twists and murky corners. Cohen calls his music "dark pop", which describes it pretty well.

It's part of the legend of Leonard Cohen that, at his first solo gig at a New York folk club, he fled from the stage in terror. This looks unlikely to happen to Adam, who, at 23, has acquired the poise and physical self-assurance of a method actor.

Slipping out of his black leather jacket, Adam crouched behind his microphone stand as though figuring out ways to subdue it by cunning strategy.

In black jeans and a dark, skinny sweater with sleeves drooping down to his knuckles, he dramatised his songs with stark stabbing gestures, crouches, jabs and dramatic jerks of the head.

Occasionally, when the light fell on him at particular angles, he resembled the actor Ewan McGregor.

This was Cohen's first performance in England, but though it lasted barely half an hour, and took place in the cramped back room of a King's Cross pub, it was enough to serve notice of a substantial talent appearing over the horizon.

Where his close pal Chris "son of Stephen" Stills is consciously working in the same sort of musical territory as his father, you'd never guess Cohen Jnr's lineage unless somebody dropped you a hint.

Surrounded by his well-drilled band, he kicked off with a terse rendition of Quarterback, a broody exercise in suppressed violence.

Next up was Tell Me Everything, a simmering love-triangle saga in which the singer interrogates a close friend who's sleeping with his girlfriend. Real-life experience? Maybe. It was a compelling performance, anyway.

Cranking up the emotional pressure with quiet glee, Cohen kept the atmosphere heavy and incestuous with a powerful version of Sister, written (he told us) about an acquaintance who set out to seduce Adam's sister as the next best thing to seducing Adam himself. As for Diary, it was the blackly humorous tale of what happened the day Cohen's girlfriend caught him reading her diary.

How the Mighty Have Fallen was a cautionary parable about power, corruption and arrogance. Not autobiographical, we assume.

This review appeared in later editions yesterday.

Sales boom risks loan rate rise

High street consumer spree puts pressure on Bank to curb inflation

Charlotte Denny

SIGNS of a renewed spending spree on the high streets yesterday capped a week of worsening economic news for the Government, raising fears that the Bank of England will raise interest rates again.

High street sales leapt last month after subdued trading in April, according to figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Slowing the boom is a prime concern for the Bank, which fears the strength of demand may be outstripping the economy's capacity to produce goods and services — leading to inflationary pressures.

Earlier in the week the ONS revealed that inflation jumped last month despite the first rise in unemployment for more than two years. The underlying measure rose to 3.2 per cent, 0.7 percentage points above the Bank's target of 2.5 per cent.

The Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, admitted yesterday the economy could be about to enter a period of "stagflation" — rising inflation and falling growth. Speaking to the Treasury select committee, Mr George said inflation could rise even as job losses mount over the next few months.

Fears that the Bank may crush accelerating inflation with another rise in cost of borrowing pushed the pound up by two and half pfennigs against the German mark. Sterling is now threatening to breach the critical DM3 barrier, closing last night in London at DM2.99.

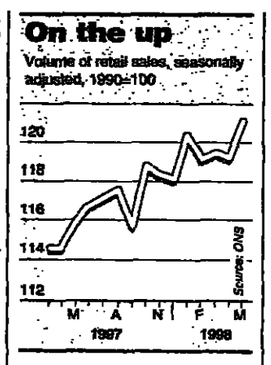
Further upward movements in the pound will increase the pressure on the already beleaguered manufacturing sector. City economists were yesterday urging the Bank not to overreact to the new data, arguing that the retail sales figures were a blip which went against the general picture of a slowing economy.

Government statisticians said that clothing and footwear sales rebounded sharply in May, after poor trading in April when weeks of rain put shoppers off purchasing summer wardrobes.

Retail sales rose by 1.7 per cent in May, after falling by 0.2 per cent in April, according to the ONS. The annual rate of growth rose to 4.6 per cent, its highest since January.

On the up

Volume of retail sales, seasonally adjusted, 1990=100



An ONS spokesman said: "It would be dangerous to conclude the trend which was slowing has started to rise again, on the basis of one month's figures."

The Royal Bank of Scotland's head of UK Treasury research, Marian Bell, said the figures increased the likelihood of a rate rise.

"It looks as though it is a weather-related boost, due to higher clothing and footwear sales," she said. "But coming in a bad week it has to increase the risk of another rise."

But the Conservatives warned that the economy was experiencing a boom and bust at the same time.

"The next meeting of the Bank's monetary policy committee will be faced with higher inflation, higher earnings growth and a Chancellor who has gone soft on public spending," said the shadow Treasury spokesman, David Heathcoat-Amory.

"Now they have these shock figures on high street spending. There must be a serious risk that they will respond by putting interest rates up yet again."

Doctors pay the price for deaths of babies

continued from page 1

rulings of the GMC's professional standards committee after eight months of hearings, Sir Donald said parents must be able to trust that a doctor will put their child's interests above all else.

Mr Wisheart should have stopped performing hole-in-the-heart operations before his last three baby patients died. "The committee have heard you 'wrestled' in your mind with the high mortality rate, which was substantially higher than the published figures for hospitals elsewhere. 'Wrestling' was not enough," Sir Donald said. He misled parents as to the risks their children faced.

Dr Roylance, as chief executive, could have stopped the operations in which too many babies were dying, but "chose, over a long period, to ignore the concerns which were being brought to your attention," Sir Donald said.

Mr Dhasmana recognised he had had problems and twice visited the best paediatric cardiac surgeon in the country to try to improve his results. But he could not get his technique right and should have stopped.

Maria Shortis, of the Bristol Heart Children Action Group, which the parents have formed, welcomed the inquiry. "We are dealing with a systematic failure and a massive cover-up which has got to stop."

The United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust said a public inquiry "will be the best way of fully exploring the events of the past and the trust will fully co-operate."

Blair's virtue: £3.60 minimum hourly pay

Seumas Milne and Michael White

TONY Blair's cabinet made a virtue of its calculated caution over Britain's first national minimum wage last night after ministers proclaimed the "end of the scandal of poverty pay" for 2 million workers and fended off criticism over the Government's watering down of the Low Pay Commission's proposals.

While some trade union leaders and leftwingers attacked the "cherrypicking" of the commission's report, surprising figures such as Dennis Skinner rallied to the Government's defence when Board of Trade president Margaret Beckett made her historic announcement to the Commons yesterday.

To Downing Street's satisfaction, a combative Mrs Beckett put a brave face on her defeat by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, over the details of the new system which will see 18- to 21-year-olds initially get only £3 an hour — and apprentices and 16- to 18-year-olds with no guaranteed minimum at all.

A £3.60 hourly rate for adults will come into effect next spring, as the commission wanted, but the Government has decided to stage the youth rate — it will rise to £3.20 in June 2000 — and extend it to cover 21-year-olds.

With pay rates rising in the economy as a whole, the Government is refusing to confirm the proposed rise from £3.60 to £3.70 in 2000.

The TUC said it was disappointed at the changes made to Professor George Bain's Commission's report, but regarded the final introduction of a legal floor under wages as a historic breakthrough which could be built on. Other union leaders — such as Bill Morris, of the Transport and General Workers' Union, who damned the Government's decisions as "an endorsement of workplace poverty" — were less conciliatory. And one Government source said last night the Chancellor had made a "dog's breakfast" of the issue.

Mrs Beckett fought in Cabinet for acceptance of the Commission report as a whole, fearing that if the government tried to pick and choose the parts it liked, industry would try too.

But Mr Brown inevitably prevailed against his old ally. Mrs Beckett told MPs last night that ministers had watered down the report because the economy is at "a critical point". With signs of a sharp slow-down ahead, the chancellor is more concerned to protect his welfare-to-work plans.

The CBI offered grudging support while echoing Tory fears that it would mean job losses.

Leader comment, page 12

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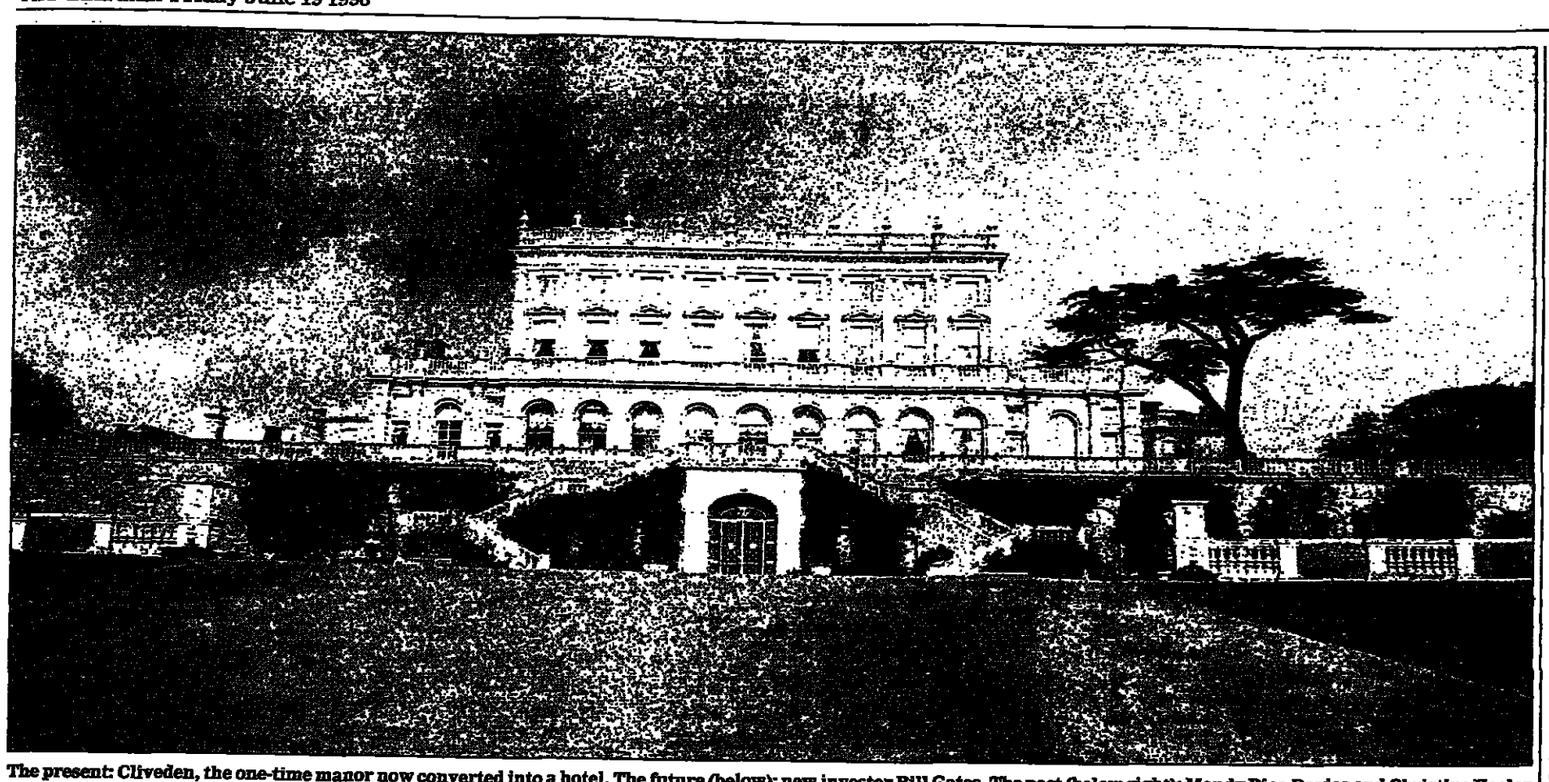
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The present: Cliveden, the one-time manor now converted into a hotel. The future (below): new investor Bill Gates. The past (below right): Mandy Rice-Davies and Christine Keeler



No wonder Bill Gates looks so pleased. He has just chipped in to buy Cliveden for £42.8 million. Former guests include Christine Keeler, Mandy Rice-Davies and Oswald Mosley



Dan Atkinson

CLIVEDEN, renowned country seat of the *louche*, Hitler-loving fast set, has been sold to a consortium whose best-known member is famous for nothing more than having dirty glasses, an eye for future developments in the computer industry and the largest personal fortune in the world. Bill Gates has joined a long line of American magnates and bought himself a real English mansion.

True, the manor in question has been an hotel since 1986. Indeed, it styles itself as one of the top three hotels anywhere in the world. And, true, Mr Gates is not planning to shift himself and his family to the banks of the Thames — Cliveden is very much an investment, not a potential home.

Nevertheless, the sale raises irresistible comparisons between yesterday's elite and today's. Where once call girl Christine Keeler skipped naked around the swimming pool, the $28 billion man will be able to stroll with his ex-employee wife Melinda, discussing the latest software.

Given that the Microsoft founder could have dropped the £42.8 million purchase price on the pavement without noticing, he is unlikely to have much time for the ghosts of Cliveden's past.

Nevertheless, in the shadows of the Buckinghamshire night lurk the shades of Soviet assistant naval attache Eugene Ivanov, bubbly blonde Mandy Rice-Davies, osteopath Stephen Ward and former war minister John Profumo, the key actors in the 1963 scandal that brought Harold Macmillan's Tory government — until that time the super-popular Blair regime of its day — to its knees.

And behind them, somewhere in the 376-acre grounds, chuckling in the manner of Oscar Wilde's Canterville Ghost at the house's brash new American owner, are the appeasers of the 1930s: would-be strongman Sir Oswald Mosley, Hitler's London ambassador Baron von Ribbentrop and their host, the then owner Lord Astor.

In those days, Cliveden was very definitely Berkshire, but boundary changes today put the Taplow mansion in Buckinghamshire. Which is fitting, in a way, as Cliveden's 17th century founder was the Duke of Buckingham.

It was he who set Cliveden's rather low tone from the start, using it to entertain both his drinking buddies and his mistress.

Waldorf Astor bought the estate in 1893 and continued the tradition of celebrating earthly pleasures by installing a "fountain of love" in front of the house. He became the first Viscount Astor in 1917, and his two sons became respectively bosses of the Observer and the Times newspapers. The elder son's wife was Nancy Astor, the first sitting woman MP.

The consortium, of which Mr Gates's Cascade personal-investment vehicle is a stakeholder, includes a Los Angeles property company and LF Strategic Realty, an offshoot of New York merchant bank Lazard Frères.

But as he grapples with a US government assault on the allegedly-monopolistic tendencies of his Microsoft empire, Mr Gates may do well to ponder the "curse of Cliveden", whose victims have included the Astors (they lost both the Times and the Observer), the Macmillan government (out shortly afterwards) and Stephen Ward (who committed suicide).

That said, American ownership is something of a Cliveden tradition: Waldorf Astor was still a US citizen when he took charge of the property.

The place and the times

- Cliveden was at the centre of two scandals in 30 years — involving first the appeasers of Hitler and then the sex scandal surrounding John Profumo (right)
- Respectable guests have included Charlie Chaplin and George Bernard Shaw
- It has 38 bedrooms and suites, four private dining rooms and three restaurants
- It was not used for Scandal, the 1989 film about the Profumo affair.
- The Cliveden company, which the consortium has bought, owns also the Royal Crescent Hotel in Bath and the Cliveden Town House near London's Sloane Square.
- Architect Charles Barry designed Cliveden and the Houses of Parliament.
- Lord Denning, later Master of the Rolls, investigated the security services in the Profumo affair.



- Denning's report was one of the fastest-selling HMSO publications of all time.
- Profumo resigned for lying to the Commons over the affair.
- The scandal threw up other lurid tales; Macmillan, told there had been 13 judges at an orgy, said: "Five I could believe, but not 13."

The man and the money

- He has been ranked the third-wealthiest person or private entity of all time; his $28 billion (£17.5 billion) fortune stands behind the $692 billion (in today's money) of the Knights Templar and the $754.5 billion calculated as belonging to Napoleon Bonaparte
- Despite that, he is thought still to cling to his "nerdpack" — the set of different-coloured ballpoints displayed in the breast pockets of computer freaks
- Gates is reported to have bought recently two adjoining houses in London's Holland Park, the neighbourhood of fellow jumper-wearer Richard Branson
- His home is a $100 million modern mansion near Lake Washington. It covers 40,000 square feet and has 45 rooms
- Chez Gates consists of seven main pavilions connected by underground passageways. A central control room is the "billion-dollar brain" of the property
- He has a 20-bay garage to house his sports-car collection
- Facsimiles of the finest works of art ever created can be beamed on to the walls of the Gates mansion at the flick of a switch
- In May this year, it was calculated the value of his Microsoft shares increased by $35,000 a minute
- He personally was reckoned to be earning something in the region of $500 (£312) a second
- Gates has said he will give away 90 per cent of his wealth during his lifetime.

Blair fiddled record on Ulster vote, Tories claim

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

BETTY Boothroyd, Speaker of the House of Commons, ordered an investigation last night into an allegation that someone acting on behalf of Tony Blair had tampered with Hansard to cut out a key commitment on the decommissioning of weapons in Northern Ireland.

The Conservatives and the Democratic Unionist Party protested to the Speaker about the mystery of the Prime Minister's missing words. But a Downing Street spokesman strenuously denied any mischief: "Any suggestion that we sought to expunge anything from Hansard is nonsense," he said.

A Hansard source explained the omission by saying that the reporter had simply been tidying up a "clumsy sentence".

The row over Hansard, the official Commons record, which is supposed to be sacrosanct, dominated a debate marking the third reading of a controversial bill on the early release of paramilitary prisoners.

The passage of the bill marked the end of the four-year-old bipartisan approach to Northern Ireland. Although Andrew Mackay, Conservative Northern Ireland spokesman, insisted that the bipartisan approach remained intact, the decision of the Tories to vote against the bill has now broken the united front.

Earlier, Peter Robinson, deputy leader of the DUP, complained to the Speaker that there was a significant discrepancy between Mr Blair's words as reported from Prime Minister's Question Time on May 6 and what he actually said, as confirmed in a video recording.

Mr Robinson said: "Clearly someone acting for or on behalf of the Prime Minister has tampered with the record of proceedings in this House."

Mr Blair had been answering a question from the Tory leader, William Hague, asking if he agreed that prisoners should not be released until the paramilitaries had substantially decommissioned their weapons. The video recording reveals that this key chunk of Mr Blair's answer is missing: "The answer to his question is yes, of course, it is the case that both in respect to taking seats in the government of Northern Ireland and in respect of the early release of prisoners, the only organisations that qualify for that are those who have given up violence and given up violence for good."

Downing Street insisted that the missing words did not alter the meaning of Mr Blair's answer.

Since the Good Friday Agreement, the parties in Northern Ireland have been arguing about whether the release of prisoners and a place for Sinn Fein on the Northern Ireland executive depended on the decommissioning of terrorist weapons.

The Conservatives and Unionists have accused Mr Blair of trying to water down the commitment because they claim the IRA will not hand over any weapons. A first hint that the IRA might decommission was given by Padraic Wilson, the IRA's commanding officer in the Maze, this week.

> 'Someone acting on behalf of the PM has tampered with Hansard'

The Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, responding to Mr Wilson, accused the IRA and Sinn Fein of deliberately sending out conflicting signals to create confusion.

Mr Trimble, significantly, was missing from the Commons last night. His opponents in the Unionist parties claimed he was trying to avoid embarrassment by voting for a deal that many in his party oppose.

Mr Trimble is caught between his need to support Mr Blair over the agreement and the demands of a substantial wing of his party oppposed to the agreement.

The divisions within the party were exposed when some of Mr Trimble's MPs issued a press release yesterday attacking the bill.

Oftel rings changes for restaurateur



Ruaridh Nicoll and Chris Barrie

THE calls were enough to make Vasos Herodotou smash his plates in fury. For three years the owner of the Greek Taverna in Carshalton, Surrey, answered his telephone in the hope of another six customers in search of moussaka, but found a salesman on the other end.

"They were driving me blooming mad," he said yesterday after becoming the first person to be formally protected by the telecoms watchdog Oftel from unsolicited calls from a telesales company.

The staff of James E James, a Liverpool-based company, were so desperate for Mr Herodotou to improve his business by taking advertisements in their publications that they once called five times in a day. The calls had left him "shouting and screaming like a raving lunatic", he said.

His taverna, which can take up to 100 people a night, depends on its phone bookings. Mr Herodotou expected calls from companies selling things, but James E James was a whole new bucket of retsina. The telesales staff were so convinced of what they were selling they refused to take him off its lists, despite his pleas.

"They could not have cared less," Mr Herodotou said. "Their attitude was 'Bad luck, mate, we are going to call you whether you like it or not'."

Yesterday Oftel took the first step in a 28-day process that will lead to an injunction preventing the company calling the restaurant again. If it breaks the injunction its directors could face imprisonment or a fine. Oftel officials described James E James as a "telesales pest".

While James E James refused to comment it proved it has its own way of seeing off unsolicited calls. Its number is not listed and the number filled with Companies House is out of date.

The man was a monster. Only filth came out of his mouth – filth or racism, especially directed to niggers and yids. He drank a litre of bourbon a day plus a six pack of Colt 45 malt liquor.

Bill Buford on Jack Kerouac

This section, page 12

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Des res . . . Birch Hall was put on the market at £1.5 million; it has five bedrooms, a library and a tennis court — as well as 6ft walls around the five acre park PHOTOGRAPH: TIM OCKENDEN

Queen stumps up to buy duchess her home

Yorks go their separate ways as royal handout sees off rival bid for £1.5m Georgian mansion

Ruaridh Nicoll

BIRCH Hall, a £1.5 million Georgian mansion in Surrey, is the new home that Sarah, Duchess of York, has set her heart on.

Contracts are expected to be exchanged within days for the 18th century, seven bedroom house set in five acres of parkland. But negotiations have been fraught, with the duchess relying heavily on financial help from the Queen to see off a gazumper.



House is handy for Eugenie, left, and Bea's school

The house is in Windlesham, close to Sunninghill, the ranch-style home built by the Duke of York for his wife before they divorced, where she has been staying for the past year in close, but not intimate proximity to Prince Andrew.

Since the Queen is putting up most of the money, the property will be in trust for Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie, whose school is only three miles away.

The duchess received £300,000 on her divorce, a figure she now complains is inadequate — especially in light of the late Princess of Wales's £17 million.

Birch Hall has been home to Richard and Melanie Wilkinson and their four young children for three years. Mr Wilkinson, a commodities broker, had accepted a £1 million-plus bid from the duchess last month, half of it her own money, but shortly afterwards another potential purchaser offered the asking price of £1.5 million. The Queen is thought to have made up the difference.

If the deal goes through, it will no doubt be a relief to Buckingham Palace that the duchess will no longer be under the same roof as her former husband, since she has told an American chat show that they "played away" rather than bring suitors home.

Birch Hall is on the site of one of Henry VII's hunting lodges. It has five reception rooms, a library, a walk-in drinks cabinet, a quadruple garage and a tennis court, as well as a staff cottage in the grounds. For privacy it is surrounded by 6 ft walls.



The Duchess of York will not have to 'play away' now she has a new home in Surrey PHOTOGRAPH: NIGEL FRENCH

Palace complains at 'intrusive' newspaper story of Prince William's teatime assignations

Ruaridh Nicoll

PRINCE William, who turns 16 on Sunday, has complained to the Press Complaints Commission about what he believes was an intrusive profile in the Mail on Sunday claiming his aides set up teatime meetings with girls of his choosing.

St James's Palace has been trying to keep a rein on expected media interest as the second in line to the throne reaches his landmark birthday.

But infuriated by a Mail on Sunday supplement, The People's Prince at 16, the palace was quick to complain in the hope it would head off further "intrusive" articles this weekend.

Prince Charles's press spokeswoman, Sandy Henney, said the paper had stepped well over the line when it published an article which made allegations about "what William may do or may not do, or think or may not think".

In the piece, Coping without Diana, journalist Barbara Jones said when the prince mentioned he liked a girl, his private secretary arranged for an approach to be made to the family so that mother and daughter could be invited to tea.

The idea incensed the prince and the palace. "It's not only inaccurate, it's grossly intrusive, we feel, into someone who isn't yet 16," Ms Henney told the UK Press Gazette, an industry magazine.

Lord Wakeham, chairman of the PCC, has contacted editors in the past few weeks, pointing out that like any other child in Britain, Prince William is entitled to finish school without the press following him around.

On the whole the palace believe the press has behaved responsibly in the wake of Princess Diana's death last year, especially given the public's interest.

"[The press] have appreciated that we have not just William but Harry who have had to come to terms with a very tragic accident and get on with the rest of their lives," Ms Henney said.

The PCC said it would do its best to resolve the situation amicably.

A spokesman for the paper said the supplement "was intended as a warm tribute to the prince and the royal family, and applauded his achievements.

"The Mail on Sunday never wished, nor now wishes to depart from the guidelines laid down from time to time by the [PCC]. As with all complaints the PCC endeavours to resolve matters directly. A meeting is being arranged to do this."

Teenage prostitute tortured youth client

A TEENAGE prostitute who tortured a 17-year-old youth because she said he failed to pay her asking price was ordered yesterday to be detained for seven years.

Sentencing her at Birmingham crown court, Mr Justice Harrison said: "Words cannot describe adequately the depravity of the violence and torture to which this young man was subjected."

The 16-year-old girl, then aged 15, was in a gang with two other teenagers, one a 14-year-old girl, and two men who attacked the youth last June in Coventry in the West Midlands. After having his genitals burned, his throat was slashed and he was thrown in a canal. Trevor Faber, prosecuting, said the youth, whom the judge asked reporters not to name, needed 70 stitches to his face and neck.

The court was told by Christopher Hotten QC, defending, that the elder girl loved horses and had been a stable hand, but had been lured into prostitution despite being of "superior intelligence", and was on crack cocaine at the time of the attack.

Mr Justice Harrison said the youth, who regularly resorted to prostitutes, had been attacked by the gang after going to the girl's flat for sex. He had agreed a price but the girl claimed he underpaid her. "He was punched and kicked repeatedly. It went on for a very long time. From time to time he was rendered unconscious.

"He was forced to eat dog biscuits and to eat a lit cigarette, and then one of you got a red hot spoon with which you burned the side of his face and his testicles and his penis.

"Finally you forced him to put his penis on the red hot ring of the stove, causing him to scream with pain."

Mr Faber said the youth was then led towards a canal and on the way was slashed across the face by the girl for trying to stop a passing police car. At the canal the three teenagers repeatedly stabbed the youth and threw him in. When he tried to get out, he had his throat slashed from ear to ear. Eventually, he swam to the other side and then collapsed outside a pub.

"During all of this he was pleading for them to stop, but they kept laughing."

The court was told how the elder girl was arrested shortly afterwards with the other two defendants, and a letter she had posted to a friend in jail was intercepted by police. "This bloke came here last night for business and did not have the full price so me and the others torched him," she wrote.

"I slashed his face and ear with a craft knife, then we slashed his throat and pushed him in the canal," she added.

In mitigation, Mr Hotten said his client had recently taken an IQ test and was found to be of "superior intelligence" and capable of a university education. She had recently worked for seven months with a senior teacher who had spoken of her as an "extremely pleasant and hardworking girl who got on with everybody else".

> 'He was pleading for them to stop, but they kept laughing'

The girl's mother was in court but refused to speak to reporters.

The judge sentenced the girl to seven years in a young offenders' institution after she admitted charges of wounding with intent and false imprisonment.

A 17-year-old male co-defendant was jailed for six years. A 15-year-old girl who admitted being part of the attack was sentenced to five years' youth detention.

Two men, Richard Thomas, aged 38, and Antony Botton, aged 42, who admitted assaulting the youth in the flat, were each sentenced to three years in jail.

Awards plan for teachers

John Carvel
Education Editor

A TELEVISED award ceremony to honour the best of the country's teachers was announced yesterday by Lord Puttnam, the film producer, in an attempt to restore battered morale.

Star teachers will be nominated by their schools, and judging panels will select 600 to compete for 150 regional prizes, leading to a glitzy presentation to 15 national winners in September next year.

Lord Puttnam, who plays a leading role on the Government's school standards task force, said the BBC promised prime time television coverage of the award ceremony, with documentaries about all the finalists. It would be a profoundly emotional event.

His scheme to celebrate excellence in the classroom has all-party support. It was commended yesterday by the six unions representing teachers and heads.

The awards will be run by a charitable trust independent of government and backed by a £3 million donation over two years from the bankers Lloyds TSB. The plans dovetail with the decision by education ministers to spend less time bashing incompetent teachers and more praising the profession's hard-working majority.

The Government is concerned that policies to raise school standards could be disrupted by growing problems of teacher recruitment, with shortages developing for maths, science and language specialists in secondary schools and increasing difficulty in filling vacant posts as heads and deputies.

David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, said the awards would "ensure that people who are giving of themselves to young people every day are given in return the esteem and the status that they deserve".

Lord Puttnam said: "No one here is pretending these awards are the single answer to ending years of real neglect of their work, but it is a beginning."

The winning teachers will get cash prizes for their schools, but the organisers are not yet saying how much. Sir John Harvey-Jones, a former chairman of ICI, will chair the judging panel.

Separate awards will be given for primary and secondary teachers in the following categories:

- ☐ Best newly-qualified teacher
- ☐ Excellence in special needs teaching;
- ☐ Most creative use of information and communications technology
- ☐ Teacher of the year
- ☐ Working with parents and the community
- ☐ Contribution to school leadership

There will also be awards for best classroom assistant, teacher of the year in a special school, and a lifetime achievement award.

Chris Woodhead, page 12

IRA bombing of City 'could have been averted'

Ex-MI5 man tells of submitting secret dossier to his superiors

Richard Norton-Taylor

AN IRA attack that devastated part of the City of London, and caused damage estimated at £1 billion, should have been avoided, a former MI5 officer claimed yesterday.

David Shayler, who has lived abroad ever since he disclosed details of MI5 activities last summer, makes the claim in the Spectator. He says he compiled a dossier concentrating on MI5's "operational inefficiency" in which he spelled out "how the attack on Bishopsgate in the City in April 1993 . . . shouldn't have happened".

His dossier, he says, also describes how an IRA member was able to carry out "large-scale attacks which threatened public safety and lives because an intelligence agency had not passed on relevant information quickly enough".

He does not name the agency or identify the attacks he is referring to.

Mr Shayler makes the allegations in the course of a sweeping attack on MI5 bureaucracy and the ineffectiveness of the cross-party parliamentary Security and Intelligence Committee.

He says he wanted to send the dossier to John Alpass, Whitehall's intelligence and security co-ordinator and former senior MI5 officer, who is carrying out a review of MI5, MI6, and GCHQ.

"As this document discussed these and other sensitive operational matters, I did not want to send it to Mr Alpass by non-secure means", he writes.

"I suggested . . . that Mr Alpass might like to see this document . . . I'm still waiting for the review to take up my invitation".

Security sources last night dismissed Mr Shayler's allegations as "sniping by a disaffected employee". However, the Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn is to question the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, about what he called "an incredibly serious accusation".

John Wadham, director of Liberty, the civil rights group, and Mr Shayler's lawyer, said: "Despite the seriousness of the allegations, the body set up by Parliament to monitor the work of the Security Service appears unwilling or unable to investigate".

He added: "My client feels that the only way to ensure that action is taken is to reveal the problems to the press".

On April 24, 1993, a large bomb exploded in a truck opposite the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in the City. A freelance photographer, Ed Henty, was killed, and 47 people were injured.

Nobody has been charged with the bombing. It was reported that Gerard Mackin, an IRA member jailed for other offences, was tailed by MI5 for months and was arrested as a suspect. A surveillance team watched him close to the site of the explosion. Though explosive traces were found on two vehicles to which he had access, no evidence was found linking him to the blast and he was released.

Mr Shayler, who faces the prospect of an Official Secrets Act prosecution if he returns to Britain, was served with an court injunction after he revealed details about MI5, including its holding files on thousands of individuals — Mr Straw among them — once considered subversive.

Later Mr Straw allowed newspapers to report Mr Shayler's claim that MI5 was tipped off in advance about the 1994 bombing of the Israeli embassy in London.

Mr Straw said that the information in possession of MI5 would not have enabled it to prevent the bombing.

● Five rounds of ammunition were discovered yesterday at the high security Full Sutton prison, near York, which holds convicted terrorists.

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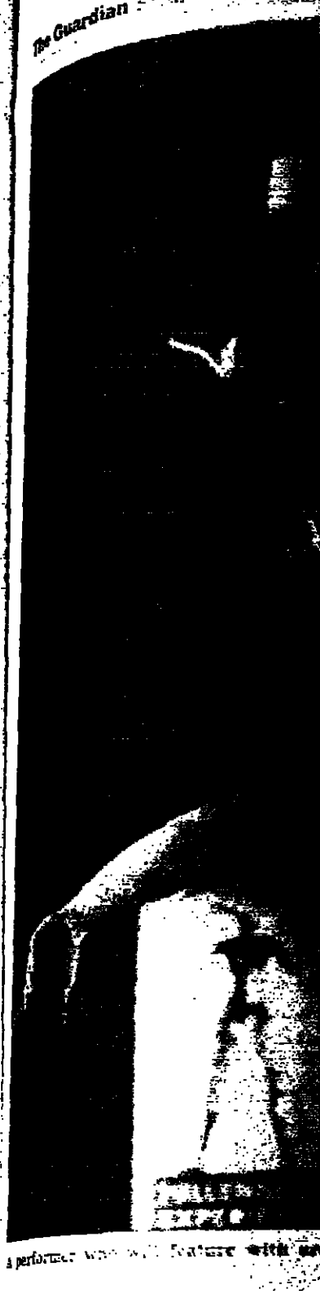


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The Guardian



A performer with [illegible] feature with [illegible]

Mighty herma... dominate Mil...

Ian Glaister
Arts Correspondent

[illegible] Well no, it [illegible] both. The [illegible] impromptu [illegible] one of the [illegible] sounding the [illegible] the Millennium [illegible] Greenwich. [illegible] pm, yesterday [illegible] under of the [illegible] ng figure [illegible] was revealed [illegible] am, half-woman.

The body will have [illegible] nose rein" [illegible] "muscular" [illegible] well as a "[illegible] dress. The rest of [illegible] m, however, will [illegible] conventional [illegible] ips and just [illegible] hind. The figure [illegible] arts will, [illegible] "smoothed over" [illegible] still decent", [illegible] ale's bust will be in proportion to the [illegible] laugh, and the male will have an "athletic bulge".

The compromise over the [illegible] gender is emblematic of the political inflation surrounding the dome. New Millennium Experience chief executive Jennie [illegible]

Palace [illegible] a skilled [illegible] female, who [illegible] defiance. [illegible] yesterday [illegible] ability for [illegible] decided. [illegible] have been [illegible] Mission [illegible]

The [illegible] ing the [illegible] dome will [illegible]

We bel... be creat... generati... perform...

[illegible] yesterday [illegible] millennium [illegible] ers of the [illegible] for the dome [illegible] a recruitment [illegible] circus perf... under the d...

Applicants previously [illegible] would be [illegible] in accordance [illegible] lots for "a [illegible] of aerial acr... rable with t... cus perform... world".

News in brief

Rail strike starts today

[illegible] maintenance workers [illegible] a four-day strike [illegible] which their union, the RMT, [illegible] warned would have a "considerable" impact on services [illegible] particularly over the week-[illegible] at least Railtrack said it ex-[illegible] pected the effect to be multi-[illegible] and train operators said [illegible] there should be no immediate [illegible] disruption.

The workers, employed by [illegible] rail engineering firms, [illegible] at stage a week-long strike [illegible] during this month. The union is [illegible] seeking a pay rise and better [illegible] conditions.

In London, the RMT announced a 24-hour strike by [illegible] the workers starting on July [illegible] the day of the World Cup [illegible] final. The action follows this [illegible] week's 48-hour walkout.

Drug charge PC sacked

A BRITISH police officer who [illegible] awaiting trial in France on [illegible] drug-smuggling charges was [illegible] yesterday sacked by his chief [illegible] constable, West Midlands [illegible]

CATHOLICS!
The Traditional Latin Mass is still widely celebrated with Episcopal permission. It is often sung with Gregorian chant. If you would like to worship at this rite of Mass contact The Latin Mass Society for an information pack 0171-404-4959 24 hrs

Nurse... theft c...

FREED nurse [illegible] McLauchlan [illegible] theft charges [illegible] 1996, Dundee [illegible] cided yesterday [illegible] aged 32, was [illegible] hearing.

The case was [illegible] without plea [illegible] McLauchlan, [illegible] was jailed in [illegible] with another [illegible] Perry, from Ali... shire, after the [illegible] tralian colleagues [illegible] ford in 1996. A S... convicted the [illegible] accessory to mu... tenced her to e... prison and 500 l...

The pair had [illegible] tences commute... by the Saudis a...

Actor s... his law...

THE Coronation... Bill Roache [illegible] former solicitor [illegible] cision to pursue [illegible] against the Sun [illegible]

The actor [illegible]

صكذا من الاصل



A performer who will feature with around 100 others under the dome's 'big top'
PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Fears remain over side-effects and costs of impotence drug

Viagra should be available on NHS by autumn, says minister

Nick Hopkins

THE impotence drug Viagra should be available on the NHS by the autumn, it was announced yesterday.

Despite fears over its side-effects and the potential costs involved, the Department of Health confirmed that GPs will be able to prescribe Viagra once it has been granted a licence.

The Government is waiting to hear from the European Medicine Evaluation Agency which is assessing the drug's safety.

It is thought that the EMEA agency will give Viagra the all clear by September.

Tessa Jowell, the Minister of State for Health, said there was no reason why the pill should not be available "to meet identified clinical need."

Although it was only launched in America in March, Viagra has become one of the most sought after — and controversial — drugs of the generation.

Doctors in the United States have written almost 2 million prescriptions so far, and a black market is fast emerging.

There has been disquiet that Viagra is being used as a recreational drug by some men, and there has also been concern over its side effects.

Viagra's manufacturer Pfizer admits the drug can cause headaches and blue vision, but it is also being linked to six heart attack deaths.

Quite apart from the scientific issues, yesterday's announcement by the Health Department is bound to divide the medical community on financial grounds.

A packet of 30 pills costs roughly £150, and there are thought to be between 2.5 and 3 million impotence sufferers in Britain.

With fund-holding doctors working within strict budgets, they could find themselves under enormous pressure to prescribe Viagra by men who view the drug as a sexual panacea.

Roger Kirby, a consultant neurologist at St George's hospital in London, said: "Viagra is a breakthrough in the treatment of erectile dysfunction, but it needs to be targeted properly at those men who really need it, otherwise the costs of prescribing it could go out of control.

"There is undoubtedly a potential problem in terms of funding which could put GPs in an awkward position."

A Health Department spokesman said it did not want to restrict Viagra to specialists at this stage, but might consider doing so if demand was huge.

"We are aware that the drug could be very popular and we are considering issuing guidelines to GPs over its prescription. Once the drug gets its licence, we will monitor it very closely."

Viagra is causing real concern across Europe.

The French health minister, Bernard Kouchner, has announced that he is calling a conference of experts to discuss its risks, and in Germany, ministers fear Viagra could bankrupt the health service.

They estimate that if every impotent German takes eight Viagra pills a month, the total cost will reach 10 billion marks (£3.34 billion).

Case for

Ann Craig, director of the Impotence Association:

"IMPOTENCE is a medical condition like any other, and in the majority of cases the causes are physical.

"Many sufferers have underlying problems with angina, duodenal ulcers or prostate cancer. There are up to 3 million men in this country with impotence. Most are over 50 and their quality of life has been seriously affected. Their self-esteem will be rock bottom.

"A lot of them will not have the money to see a private consultant, and we would certainly not advocate Viagra being available over the counter. It is a powerful drug that needs to be controlled.

"But it is only fair that genuine sufferers should be able to get treatment on the NHS.

"I cannot imagine that doctors here are going to be inundated by men asking for Viagra. Most sufferers would rather die than talk to their doctor about impotence; some won't even discuss it with their wives.

"A lot of nonsense has been written about Viagra. It won't make any man a stud. Men won't become great lovers ... it will help them get an erection, but they will have to rely on the same old technique.

"As long as doctors only prescribe for genuine cases, there is no reason why Viagra should not be on the NHS."

Case against

Dr Richard Petty, medical director of the Wellman Clinic in London:

"THERE are practical and financial reasons why Viagra should not be prescribed by GPs. First, on average a GP has five minutes for a consultation with a patient, which is simply not enough time to establish why a man has erectile dysfuntion.

"Ideally, the patient should have a full physical examination, and his medical and sexual history discussed. There are any number of tests that need to be done.

"For instance, it is important to know whether there is heart disease and I would want to establish the patient's level of stress. The man may need treatment for diabetes, or have arterial problems which need to be addressed. Viagra is not a solution for these kinds of problems. It might help him get an erection, but nothing else.

"Rather than properly assessing whether a patient really needs Viagra, the doctor will be tempted to think 'what the hell' and prescribe it anyway, which could be very expensive for the NHS.

"The drug is effective but it is not cheap. Viagra is far too powerful a drug to be sold over the counter ... for now it is best left in the hands of experts at specialist clinics."

Mighty hermaphrodite will dominate Millennium Dome

Dan Glaister
Arts Correspondent

Is it a girl? Is it a boy? Well no, it is neither. Or both. The art of political compromise served to clear up one of the mysteries surrounding the contents of the Millennium Dome in Greenwich, south-east London, yesterday when the gender of the giant reclining figure in the body zone was revealed to be ... half-man, half-woman.

The body will have "Siamese twin" characteristics: a "muscular" male chest as well as a "shapely" female chest. The rest of the figure, however, will be sadly conventional: merely two legs and just the one, bald, head. The figure's private parts will, designers say, be "smoothed over" or "swimsuit decent", while the female's bust will be in proportion to the figure's height, and the male will have an "athletic bulge".

The compromise over the gender is emblematic of the political infighting surrounding the dome. New Millennium Experience chief executive Jennie Paige is thought to have wanted the figure to be female, while Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio but with responsibility for the dome, was undecided. He is thought to have come up with the combination figure.

The surreal air surrounding the contents of the dome was reinforced by yesterday's second piece of millennium news. Organisers of the central spectacle for the dome are to launch a recruitment drive for 100 circus performers to star under the dome's "big top".

> 'We believe we will be creating a new generation of performers'

Applicants need have no previous experience, but would be expected to train as acrobats and trapeze artists for "a dazzling display of aerial acrobatics comparable with the greatest circus performances in the world".

At the end of their training they will receive a Certificate in Higher Education — equivalent to the first year of a degree — before beginning rehearsals for the central show.

Ms Paige said: "We believe we will be creating a new generation of performers throughout the country. For those in the show it will be a stepping stone to a career in entertainment and performance."

Mark Fisher, the designer of the 20-minute show, which will be seen six times a day, said: "The dome is on a scale that nobody has worked with before. The space is bigger than most people have ever been in and will have an impact that is not yet fully appreciated. To fill it requires a spectacle that uses the language of the Notting Hill carnival and the stagecraft of rock concerts. We will not be creating a circus but will be using circus techniques to tell a story."

Auditions will be held around the country in the summer. Start juggling now.

Gene found to offer protection to a minority

Smokers at double risk of Alzheimer's

Sarah Boseley
Health Correspondent

PEOPLE who smoke are twice as likely to get Alzheimer's disease in old age as those who have never smoked, a study published yesterday concludes.

In the past research appeared to suggest smoking has if anything a protective effect, but scientists from Rotterdam who report the results of their study in this week's Lancet, believe it safeguards only those people who carry a particular gene.

The study was carried out by A Ott and colleagues from the Erasmus university medical school. Researchers contacted every individual over the age of 55 in one Rotterdam suburb, and 78 per cent agreed to take part — 6,870 men and women. Each was given a medical examination and an interview at home. Two years later they were followed up to see if any had developed signs of dementia.

Out of the group, 146 had developed dementia. Where possible they were given a brain scan which suggested that in 105 cases they were suffering from Alzheimer's disease rather than vascular dementia.

Those who still smoked were found to be twice as likely to develop dementia of any kind — Alzheimer's or vascular dementia — as those who had never smoked. Those who were former smokers had a slightly increased chance of getting the disease over non-smokers. Smokers also tended to develop dementia at a younger age than non-smokers.

But Dr Ott and his colleagues found that some smokers were protected from an increased risk if they carried the gene for a protein that has been linked with Alzheimer's, called APOE epsilon 4. Their risk is no greater than that of non-smokers. But when those people are removed from the statistics, the smokers without the protective gene are seen to have an even greater risk of Alzheimer's — they are four times more likely to develop the disease than non-smokers.

The scientists do not yet understand why APOE epsilon 4 protects smokers. They suggest two possible explanations — one is that the gene acts together with cigarette smoke to alter the brain chemistry in some way that counters the erosion caused by Alzheimer's. The other possibility is that smokers with the gene do not live long enough to develop the disease.

Low pay unit stays despite Brown cuts

Michael White
and Seumas Milne

THE ministerial battle over the national minimum wage was fought to the eleventh hour this week, as Gordon Brown insisted on paring down key awards of the Low Pay Commission.

Most of the commission chairman Professor George Bain's 24 recommendations were accepted and the battle has now been won to maintain the commission to monitor upratings.

But the Chancellor imposed his will to achieve three changes, only finally agreed on Wednesday night — less than 24 hours before Margaret Beckett, whom he worsted in the Whitehall turf war, made yesterday's historic Commons statement.

The already lower rate for 18 to 20-year-olds has been reduced to £3 and extended to 21-year-olds — though the commission has been asked to review this decision next year — and the recommended increase of the main rate to £3.70 in 2000 has not yet been confirmed. The £3.20 will apply from 1999 for workers over 21 for the first six months in a new job with accredited training.

The commission said it sought to make "a substantial difference" without destroying jobs and raising prices.

The report indentifies 2 million people, mostly low-paid and part-time women workers, who will benefit directly, along with young people, and those employed in unskilled manual work and "personal service occupations", like caring, domestic cleaning and hairdressing.

One third of home-workers, 20 per cent of lone parents and 10 per cent of ethnic minority workers stand to gain from the £3.60 figure. But the commission, which included both sides of industry, plus independent experts, insists that, while some individuals stand to gain sharply — the average increase for the 2 million beneficiaries will be 32 per cent — the total wage bill will only rise by around 0.5 per cent.

The key recommendations were:

- ☐ A £3.60 an hour national minimum wage (NMW) from April 1999, rising to £3.70 in June 2000; a "development rate" of £3.20 for 18-20 year-olds and older workers beginning a job with recognised training, rising to £3.30 in June 2000; 16 and 17-year-olds exempt;
- ☐ Employers required to list NMW details on pay slips, with verification and enforcement by a government agency; system to be reviewed in two years;
- ☐ Definition of NMW to include gross pay before tax, NIC and other deductions, plus incentive payments; piece workers to get NMW equivalent on average for pay period;
- ☐ Tips and service payments distributed centrally via the payroll to count against the NMW, but cash tips paid by customers direct to staff not included; nor are premium payments for overtime and shift work;
- ☐ Allowances and supplements to be excluded;
- ☐ All benefits in kind to be excluded except accommodation where a maximum figure of £20 a week is included;
- ☐ Definition of working hours should include all time when the worker "is at the employer's disposal".

Hospital shortcomings 'costing lives'

Sarah Boseley

SUBSTANTIAL numbers of patients admitted to hospital intensive care units die unnecessarily because basic procedures such as ensuring they are breathing and their heart is pumping correctly have not been carried out, according to yesterday's British Medical Journal.

A team of consultants conducted a confidential inquiry into the treatment received by 100 patients, split between a large district general hospital in Portsmouth and a teaching hospital in Southampton.

They found that 54 out of the 100 patients were not well managed before they reached intensive care. Of the 54, 25 died. Peter McQuillan, a consultant in the department of intensive care medicine at Queen Alexandra hospital, Cosham, Portsmouth, and others write that poor quality care was a factor in a third of those deaths, probably a factor in 21 per cent and possibly in a further 32.5 per cent.

"Failings of clinicians of all grades over a wide range of tasks and knowledge have been shown," the report says. "This study suggests a fundamental problem of failure to appreciate that airway, breathing and circulation are the prerequisites of life."

Some reasons for "suboptimal care" were basic. Medical staff lacked knowledge, failed to appreciate the urgency of the case, were not supervised, did not seek advice or were inadequately organised.

News in brief

Rail strike starts today

RAIL maintenance workers begin a four-day strike today which their union, the RMT, warned would have a "considerable" impact on services, particularly over the weekend. But Railtrack said it expected the effect to be minimal, and train operators said there should be no immediate disruption.

The workers, employed by nine rail engineering firms, will stage a week-long strike later this month. The union is seeking a pay rise and better conditions.

In London, the RMT announced a 24-hour strike by Tube workers starting on July 12 — the day of the World Cup final. The action follows this week's 48-hour walkout

Drug charge PC sacked

A BRITISH police officer who is awaiting trial in France on drug smuggling charges was yesterday sacked by his chief constable. West Midlands police said PC John McAnenny, 47, was dismissed for discreditable conduct after a disciplinary hearing conducted in his absence.

McAnenny, who had 24 years' service with the force, pleaded guilty to the discreditable conduct charge by letter. The officer, from Birmingham, is awaiting trial in France after being arrested by customs officers on a yacht in Calais in January. The craft was loaded with cannabis with a street value estimated at £1 million.

Nurse faces theft charges

FREED nurse Lucille McLauchlan will face two theft charges dating from 1996, Dundee sheriff court decided yesterday. McLauchlan, aged 32, was not present at the hearing.

The case was adjourned without plea until July 16.

McLauchlan, from Dundee, was jailed in Saudi Arabia with another nurse Deborah Parry, from Alton, Hampshire, after the murder of Australian colleague Yvonne Gilford in 1996. A Saudi court convicted the Scot of being an accessory to murder and sentenced her to eight years in prison and 500 lashes.

The pair had their sentences commuted last month by the Saudis and flew home.

Actor sues his lawyers

THE Coronation Street actor Bill Roache yesterday sued his former solicitors over the decision to pursue a libel claim against the Sun newspaper.

The actor turned down an offer of £50,000 to settle his libel action against the paper after it branded him "boring". The case went before a jury and he won his case, but was awarded exactly the sum he had refused, £50,000.

Initially he was also awarded costs against the Sun but later that decision was overturned by the Court of Appeal.

At the High Court in Manchester, he is suing his then solicitors, Peter Carter-Ruck and Partners, over the advice he received before he turned down the initial offer to take the cash and avoid the jury trial.

Mr Roache, who sat in court with his wife Sara, alleges his former solicitors were negligent in the way they advised him in his claim against the Sun which began in 1991.

The hearing continues.

Damages for family

THE family of a prisoner who was shackled to a hospice bed while he was dying of stomach cancer has been awarded damages, the Prison Service confirmed yesterday. They are believed to have been given about £25,000 "in recognition of the distress caused by the circumstances of his death".

Geoffrey Thomas, 25, of Caerphilly, South Wales, died in the Marie Curie centre at Penarth in January 1997. He had been remanded to Cardiff prison in October 1996, accused of burglary, and became ill in December. He was shackled to his bed by his leg and arms for three days and when he was released, following an emergency bail order, he was unconscious and died three hours later.

Judges raise depressed man's damages to £1m

Jamie Wilson

A SECOND-hand car salesman who became "depressed and grumpy" after a road accident had damages awarded to him increased from £30,500 to over £1 million by the Court of Appeal yesterday.

Raymond Arrowsmith, aged 49, had a sparkling personality and put his whole life into a highly successful second-hand car business, achieving turnovers approaching £1 million a year, Lord Justice Brooke said in a ruling.

But after the "horrifying experience" of the accident, when his car was overturned and crushed by another vehicle in 1990, he lost interest in work, his sex drive "almost completely disappeared" and his marriage broke up. He began living alone in a French village where he did not have to talk to anyone.

In April last year Deputy High Court Judge Simpson awarded Mr Arrowsmith a total of £30,565 in damages and interest, finding that the effects of his injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder had lasted for only a year after the accident.

But yesterday Lord Justice Brooke said this was a "rare case" in which the Court of Appeal could interfere with the High Court findings because Judge Simpson should have taken longer to read the "very sophisticated psychiatric evidence" before giving his ruling.

Mr Arrowsmith, of Brentwood, Essex, claimed that the High Court judge had been wrong to hold that he was not suffering from psychiatric illness a year after the accident, and wrong to conclude that the accident had not contributed to his mental problems.

Mr Arrowsmith, who has three children, had worked in the used car business for more than 30 years and had owned his own dealership since 1976.

The trial judge said that before the accident witnesses described Mr Arrowsmith as a workaholic with a phenomenal memory who could make quick, instantaneous decisions. He worked long hours, seven days a week, and even before the accident his medical history "illustrated the all too frequent downside for a highly motivated successful man, namely an anxious personality and subject to stress".

Mr Arrowsmith had not broken any bones in the crash, but afterwards had suffered headaches, nightmares and memory loss and been unable to cope with his business.

Eventually he had been forced to stop trading in April 1991, and he had not worked since.

Friends said his character had changed and was now "depressed and grumpy".

Psychiatrists who examined him found he suffered from panic attacks and was tearful when talking about his past.

Lord Justice Brooke, whose findings were endorsed by Lord Justice Morritt and Lord Justice Hirst, said: "In my judgment the evidence from all sources, lay and medical, was overwhelmingly to the effect that the plaintiff was suffering from a continuing, moderately severe, depressive disorder."

The judge in the High Court should have reached the same conclusion, he said.

Damages will be paid by the insurers of the other car involved in the road crash.

Child witnesses taught about law

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

A POP-UP courtroom with cut-out judge, jury, lawyers, ushers and spectators to be slotted into their correct places is to be given to child witnesses to familiarise them with court procedure.

The information pack aimed at minimising the stress on children giving evidence in abuse cases will be launched today by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, and the Director of Public Prosecutions, Dame Barbara Mills.

For some children, telling their story in a crowded court can be more traumatic than the original abuse. Children have cried, had asthma attacks, vomited, or, in one case, had an epileptic fit.

The pack, an expanded version of one launched five years ago by the NSPCC and Childline, is for witnesses aged between five and 17, and will be given free by police to children giving evidence.

The NSPCC said that at present one in three child witnesses received no support.Its chief executive, Jim Harding, said: "The NSPCC has found that some children are so distressed that they would not report the abuse if it happened again."

There are three booklets geared to different ages giving basic information about being a witness. Children are told they may take their time answering a question, that there is nothing wrong in saying "I don't know" or "I can't remember", that they can ask for a question to be repeated if they do not understand, and that they can use whatever words they like even if they believe them to be rude.

Witness packs were used in a recent case in the North-east where a primary school teacher was convicted of indecently assaulting a number of girl pupils. The children were given an activity book to colour in, and a pop-up courtroom. They were taken to the court in advance and shown the room where they would give evidence by video link.

The mother of one girl aged eight, who gave evidence which helped to convict the teacher, said: "I think this stopped her from breaking down. I hate to think what the outcome of the case would have been if she hadn't got that preparation."

CATHOLICS!
The Traditional Latin Mass is still widely celebrated with Episcopal permission.
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The Latin Mass Society
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0171-404-4959 24 hrs.

Defiant return home

Au pair blames 'tainted jurors'



Tired but fluent Louise Woodward at her Manchester press conference yesterday: 'I just hope the medical community will help to prove my innocence' PHOTOGRAPH: DON McPHEE

Martin Walker and David Ward

THE world's most notorious au pair yesterday defied both exhaustion and the massed lenses and notebooks of 150 journalists to protest her innocence, insist she would not sell her story, and speculate on her future.

She also announced that she would follow, without payment, the Princess of Wales into the Martin Bashir hot seat for a special edition of Panorama on BBC1.

In spite of the long haul from Boston and up the M6 — plans to fly from London to Manchester were scrapped because of the number of journalists aboard the flight — Louise Woodward spoke confidently and fluently, pushing aside questions she did not want to answer.

After almost two years as an image — tragic victim or devious villain — she appeared already normal, and livelier than in the stolid pictures from the Boston court.

"I feel very sorry for the death of baby Matthew, but like I said time and time I had nothing to do with his death," she told reporters squashed into Manchester Airport's marketing suite. "I did not hurt Matthew and I did not kill baby Matthew. I just hope that the medical community will take up my case now that all avenues of appeal are closed, to help prove my innocence."

Dressed in denim shirt with white T-shirt underneath, she insisted she had not received a fair trial because of "atrocious" adverse publicity in the US and because the jury pool was "tainted".

She said: "The prosecutors are elected in Boston. I think it is purely political. I didn't get my say until the trial and by then it was too late.

"I was thrown in jail and not given a chance."

She declined to send a message to Matthew's parents.

Before she and her family filed in at 8.55 am, the press conference was skilfully held to ransom by Woodward's MP, Andrew Millar, Labour member for Ellesmere Port and Neston, who has become a family friend. "There's going to have to be a certain degree of discipline in the way we handle this," he said. "I hope one of you won't screw it up for everyone else."

When a truculent Scottish reporter protested, he rapped: "If you push her hard like that, I will terminate the press conference."

Woodward's treatment was generally mild as a result, although she was confronted with yesterday's Daily Mirror front page headline First Class Child Killer.

Her father, Gary, looked uncomfortable when she started advocating the need for "educating people about shaken baby syndrome", but her other replies, in a distinctive Merseyside-cum-Massachusetts voice peppered with "I guess", roused no hostility from the big American press corps, including the man from Boston TV with his personal cafetiere.

Their strongest sally met a calm: "Of course I'm upset that I've got a conviction, but it's a conviction I don't deserve. And I think in time the truth will come out. I think in time I will be cleared."

Woodward agreed that she was no longer the Louise who went to America and had grown up a lot. In the short term, her plans are thought to include a photo-opportunity, a wander round Elton's few shops, and perhaps a trip to church on Sunday. Woodward's wish to go to university — possibly in London — was warmly endorsed in the village by her former primary school teacher, Diane Jones. "It's going to be very tough but hopefully she will get into college life," she said. "She will be able to integrate better at a big university than by taking a job in a small place."

But Debbie Miller, a 20-year-old mother of two who went to school with Woodward, feared the notoriety would never die. "I don't think she will ever be able to lead a normal life. Even if she goes to university in London, she will always be recognised. It's perhaps best for her to stay in Elton, where she has so much support."

Yellow ribbons were tied to trees and lamposts in Elton. But the streets were largely empty as Woodward drove home through the rain to an emotional reunion with her 19-year-old sister, Vicky.

Woodward 'will not sell her story'

The following is a transcript of Louise Woodward's statements at the news conference.

"YOU'LL have to forgive me because I don't have a prepared statement. I guess there's just a few points I would like to make.

I'm very pleased to be home, back on English soil. I've really missed the place, and I would like to thank all the people who supported me, and all the people who have given money to my trust fund that helped me with my defence.

I'd like to thank my lawyers in America and my lawyers here. Obviously I've made a lot of friends in America and I'm going to miss them a lot, but I'm really pleased to be home.

I'd just like to say that contrary to any rumours and any speculation that I've heard in America I've not sold my story. And as far as interviews are concerned I'm going to be doing the interview with the BBC, for which obviously there is no payment. I guess I'll just finish on saying that despite the fact I feel very sorry for the death of baby Matthew, like I said time and time again I had nothing to do with his death.

I did not hurt Matthew and I did not kill baby Matthew. I just hope that the medical community will take up my case now that all avenues of appeal are closed, to help prove my innocence. And that's all I'd like to say. Thank you."

Asked how she could prove her innocence she said:

"I think the medical evidence is the only thing that can really do that. We tried to do that in the trial and I think that because of the pre-trial publicity I didn't get a fair trial. With the missing medical evidence I didn't receive a fair trial and I think the only way to do it now is through educating people. I'm all in favour of educating people about shaken baby syndrome ... and hopefully prevent mistakes being made and a rush to judgment like what happened in my case. I'd like to do it in the medical community."

Did she have any message for the Eappens?

"No, I don't."

Had she feared the Supreme Court judges would rule against her?

"No. I couldn't. I knew I was coming home. Of course I was hopeful because it was taking so long maybe that they were considering acquittal. I'm disappointed that they didn't. But I was confident I was going to come home."

How important had the support from home been to her?

"Do you mean just in Elton? I had support from all over the world. I had support from the whole of Britain. I used to receive mountains of mail. It made a big difference. Whenever I got my hands on a British newspaper it helped me to think that I wasn't forgotten and at least people were supporting me. It made a big difference."

What would she do with her trust fund?

"With my trust fund? I don't think I can answer questions about that right now. As to my future I guess I will have to think about that too. I would like to go to university like I was planning to do in the first place. I'd like to do what any other 20-year-old would do. I would like to get a part-time job, you know, do a few other things."

How had she changed in the two years she had been away?

"I've grown up an awful lot. I know too much about American law. I just, I hope it will have changed me for the better, but I guess only time will tell how it's really changed me."

Was she upset at carrying the label of a manslaughter conviction?

"Of course I'm upset that I've got a conviction, but it's a conviction I don't deserve. And I think in time the truth will come out. I think in time I will be cleared."

How would she meet her lawyers' bills for a civil lawsuit?

"I can't answer questions about that. I'm sorry."

Did she think her life would ever be the same again?

"Of course not. How could it be? But I really don't know."

How did she feel reading newspaper headlines describing her as a child killer? Could she understand how people might feel that way about her?

"Like I said I put it all down to the atrocious pre-trial publicity that I received in America. I was thrown in jail, and not given a chance to; the only way I could get my side across would be to give away my entire defence. And my voice was taken away from me. The prosecutors are elected in Boston, I think it is purely political. I didn't get my say until the trial and by then it was too late. I think the jury pool was tainted and like I said I don't think I got a fair trial."

What message did she have for the people of Elton?

"Just a huge thank you for all the support. I saw it all on TV. I appreciate it very much."

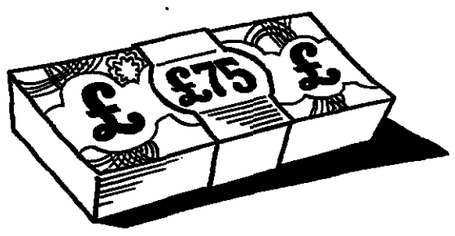
Was she treated differently because she was not American?

"I don't think I can answer that."

Why had she decided not to sell her story?

"Well, I said all along I just don't think it would be right. I think that's just a decision we made as a family. I don't think it's the right venue."

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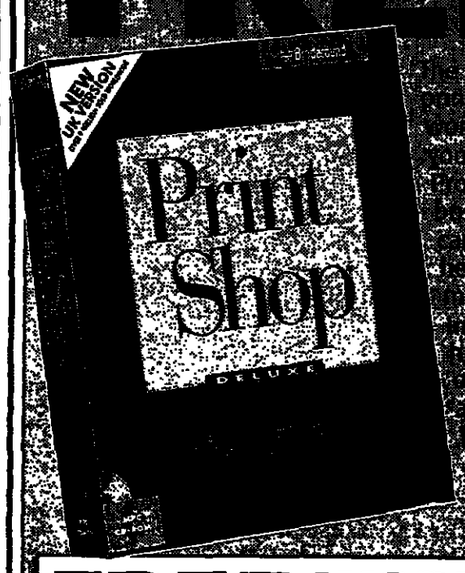


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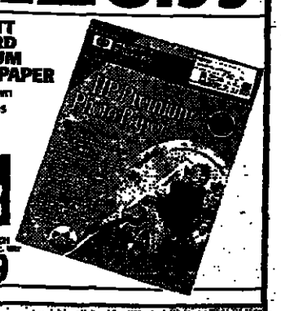
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Burglary added to miseries of hotline and fraud

Gang grabs thousands of tickets

Jon Henley in Paris

AS IF the horrors of the hotline and the frustrations of large scale fraud were not enough, an authorised World Cup travel agency said yesterday thieves had broken into its Paris office and made off with 15,000 World Cup tickets.

Tickets for England's games against Romania and Colombia and Scotland's against Morocco were among those stolen overnight from the French offices of Prime Sport International, one of the World Cup's 17 official ticket re-sellers, the company said. Also missing were tickets for 25 other first round matches, the quarter-finals, semi-finals and the final.

Prime Sports, an international agency based in Beverly Hills, California, offered a £100,000 reward for the return of the tickets, which had all been pre-sold and were to be delivered.

Steve Yovetich, a company spokesman, said the tickets were useless to thieves as they were all marked with their buyers' names and numbers allocated by the World Cup organising committee, the CFO.

Thousands of fans have had no trouble getting in to games with tickets bought through unofficial channels and bearing someone else's name.

"The tickets are worthless to anyone but the legal buyer, but as they are important to our reputation we are offering a no-questions-asked cash reward for their return," Mr Yovetich said. "We urge the thief or whoever knows where the tickets are to call us or the police."

He dismissed reports of minimal ticket checks at stadiums, saying anyone trying to get in using the stolen tickets "will be caught and could be tried as an accomplice to the burglars".

A spokesman for the CFO said its ticket department had called an emergency meeting to discuss the case, but ruled out the possibility of replacement tickets.

The burglars also got away with £240,000 in French francs, £100,000 in sterling, £23,500 in US travellers cheques and an unspecified number of multiple-access passes for the Stade de France stadium outside Paris.



Enthusiastic South African fans before the start of the match against Denmark yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: THOMAS KIENZLE

Coming on heavy with the metal

World Cup 98

Diary

ENGLAND football fans will have to watch their team from behind metal fences after Fifa announced yesterday that perimeter barriers will be specially installed for England's match against Romania in Toulouse on Monday.

The fences, two metres high, will be installed in Toulouse's Stade Municipale on Sunday night. They were removed prior to the World Cup but the fittings were left in place to enable the fences to be erected within two hours.

"We are doing it with reluctance," a Fifa spokesman said yesterday.

The return of perimeter fencing will be met with dismay by England supporters, who have grown used to their absence in English football since they were done away with in the aftermath of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster in which 95 Liverpool supporters were crushed to death.

Yesterday David Mellor, head of the Football Task Force, attacked the decision: "Speaking in a personal capacity, I think there is a real danger of an over-reaction to the hooliganism in Marseille. The hooliganism was deplorable and those who carried it out should be severely punished, not just in France but back home in England.

"There was no trouble at the game itself in Marseille. I cannot think of any justification for bringing back fences. I would urge the French authorities to keep a sense of proportion. This is a sign of just how much damage a few drunken yobs can cause."

AFTER the débacle in Marseille, the city authorites decided to enforce an alcohol prohibition for this weekend's clash between the Netherlands and South Korea. But under pressure from local café owners (who are clearly not expecting hordes of South Korean skinheads to descend on the city chanting "No surrender to North Korea") the powers-that-be have relented and agreed to allow sales of drinks until midnight.

NO such problems for alcohol retailers in Britain. The Aluminium Can Recycling Association estimates that 610 million cans of drink will have been consumed by the end of the World Cup. While the rest of us have been sitting back and enjoying the matches, somebody at the association has spent most of their waking hours working out that, laid end to end, the cans would stretch from London to Paris 90 times and be worth £4.5 million if recycled. The figure would have been higher, but Paul Gascoigne and Teddy Sheringham are out of the country at the moment.

MEANWHILE Chinese doctors have warned football fans with high blood pressure, hardened arteries or heart problems to cut back on watching matches for the sake of their health, following the sad news that the World Cup has claimed its first victim. According to the Guangzhou Daily Reporter, an elderly Chinese fan died of a heart attack during Brazil's 3-0 demolition of Morocco on Tuesday. Identified only as Ni, the man had been crazy about soccer since childhood and had taken to sleeping during the days and staying up every night to watch the games live from France. His wife was woken by a shout during the match but by the time she got up to investigate, Ni was lying paralysed and unconscious on the floor. He was taken to a nearby hospital but doctors could not save him.

AS reported in the diary last week, the campaign by those World Cup killjoys the Television Licensing Authority to crack down on football fans without a TV licence has got off to a triumphant start. The authority, which has drafted in extra detection teams for the tournament, has caught more than 8,000 offenders since June 10 — 3,000 have been netted during England and Scotland games alone.

ONE person who presumably does have a licence is Linda Davis from North Yorkshire, who is being sponsored to watch all 64 matches on TV for charity. "It is hard work watching all that football. After three matches you begin to get a little confused as to which team you are watching," Mrs Davis said.

SELF-STYLED anti-fascist campaigner Eric Cantona has been dropped from a Nike World Cup advertising campaign because a poster featuring the enigmatic Frenchmam was considered too "fascist" in style. The poster, showing Cantona in triumphant pose against a graphic backdrop reminiscent of the regime of Italian dictactor Benito Mussolini, sparked protests from French pressure groups.

Jamie Wilson and John Duncan

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Disaffected Czechs ready to swing left

Ian Traynor in Prague

THE Czech Republic is about to move left for the first time since the 1989 velvet revolution ushered in democracy, according to every opinion poll.

In their general election today and tomorrow, which follows months of uncertain caretaker government, 10 million Czechs will also prepare to take their leave of the two figures who have shaped the country since the overthrow of communism: President Vaclav Havel and the former prime minister Vaclav Klaus.

Mr Havel has been gravely ill for most of the past 18 months, and the abrasive Mr Klaus, whose espousal of unregulated markets sparked a corruption and asset-stripping bonanza, has caused mass disaffection.

But, dazed and confused by a campaign long on personal mudslinging and short on policy, voters are fearful of what is in store and will not deliver the clear verdict needed to ensure a stable government.

Uniquely in post-communist central Europe, the Czechs have stuck by the rightwing free-market policies of Mr Klaus for the past eight years while, for example, Poles and Hungarians have alternated between the right and the reformed communists, most recently evicting the left in Hungary last month and Poland last year.

But economic austerity and decline, rampant corruption, and Mr Klaus's increasingly arrogant and wayward style have decimated his support.

Today's election represents a transition to the post-Havel and post-Klaus era, even though their roles could be crucial in the haggling that is inevitable in the months ahead.

Milos Zeman's Social Democrats seem certain to emerge as the strongest party in the 200-seat parliament, but with seven parties expected to win seats under the proportional representation system he will have a struggle to fashion a workable coalition.

"This is the only post-communist country which has not had a swing of the pendulum," said Jiri Pehe, President Havel's main political adviser. "But people are afraid of change, and we're in a bit of a political vacuum."

The election comes two years early because Mr Klaus was toppled last November in an inner-party coup triggered by a party funding scandal. Warning that a vote for the Social Democrats will take the country back to the bad old days of Bolshevism, Mr Klaus is making a spirited attempt to revive his career and take revenge on his many enemies.

"Klaus's talk of a return to communism is nonsense," said Vladimir Mlynar, minister without portfolio in the caretaker cabinet and a bright 32-year-old tipped as a future prime minister, though not yet.

"There are lots of people who can't support Klaus with a clear conscience and are caught in no man's land with nowhere to go," said Mr Pehe.

The Czech Social Democrats, unlike other parties of that name in the region, are not reformed communists. The Communists keep their name.

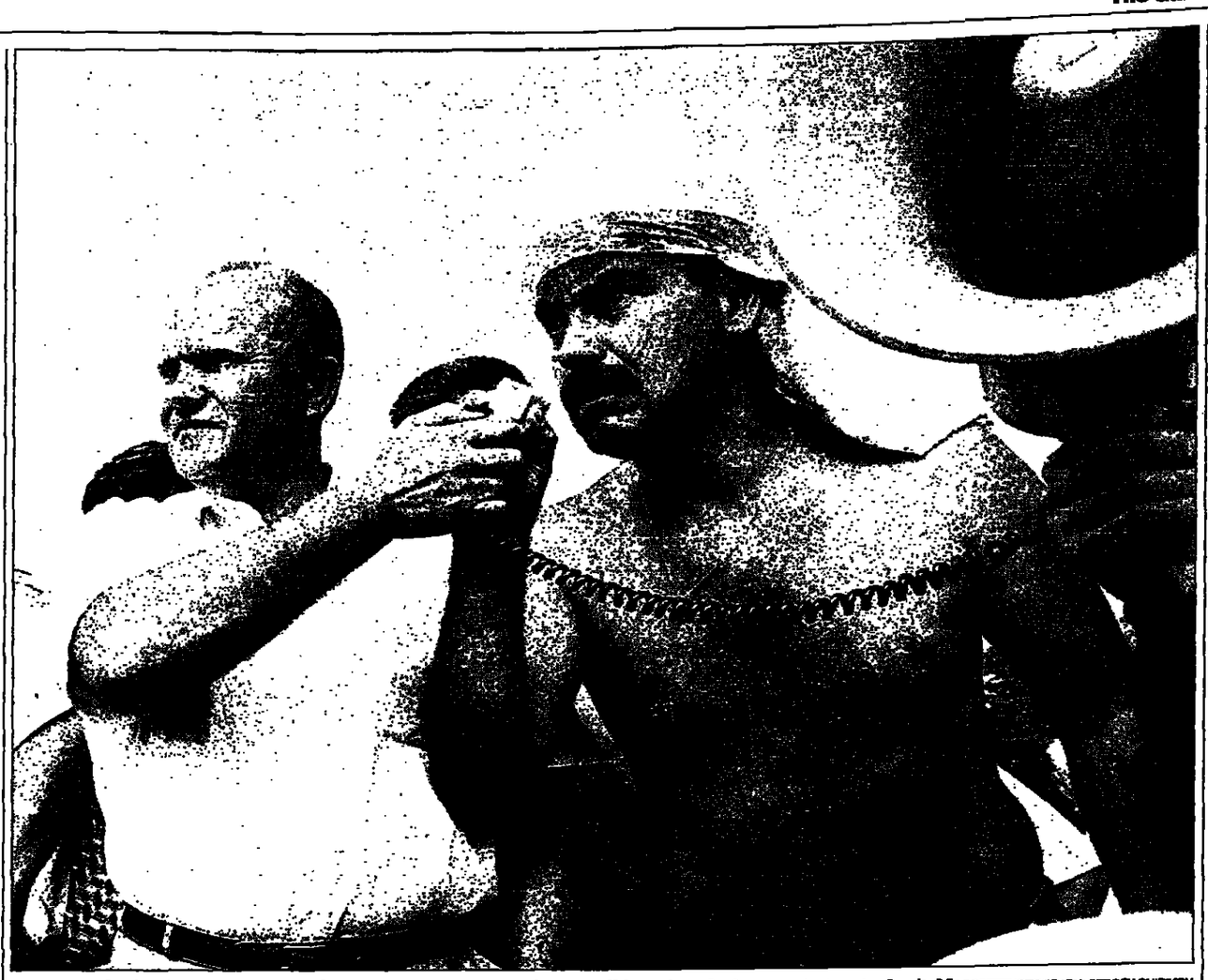
Mr Klaus's Civic Democratic Party is tipped to come second, with up to 20 per cent of the vote to the Social Democrats' 25-30 per cent. But the opinion polls put the don't knows at 15-50 per cent, and there are several coalition permutations possible, depending on the outcome.

The simplest is a coalition of the Social Democrats and Civic Democrats, but its chances are clouded by the visceral antipathy between Mr Zeman and Mr Klaus.

Making a rather desperate national appeal for temperance from both the voters and the politicians, Mr Havel did little to lessen public anxiety.

"Three governments could fall and there would be more early elections," he warned. "The German mark would cost 35 crowns [double the current rate] and we would be moving towards the Balkans and a banana republic."

The election is likely to produce a hung parliament and a minority government which will fail to complete its four-year term. The most likely minority coalition would link Mr Zeman with with the small centrist Christian Democrats and the new Pensioners' Party, a leftwing single-issue lobby of the elderly.



Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov (left) takes the microphone from a striking miner during a protest yesterday in Moscow PHOTOGRAPH: SERGEY CHIRIKOV

Russian 'beggar' asks for billions

James Meek in Moscow

ANATOLY CHUBAIS, the government minister ordinary Russians most love to hate, admitted yesterday the country urgently needs $10 billion (£6 billion).

For weeks, economists and investors have been saying Russia needs an emergency loan to shore up the rouble, while the government has insisted it can cope with the financial crisis without help.

Yesterday Mr Chubais, who was appointed to the government this week for the third time in his career, finally accepted it could not.

President Boris Yeltsin and his cabal of worried Russian industrialists place almost mystical faith in Mr Chubais's ability to persuade Western bankers and politicians. He has been nominated as Russia's representative to deal with the International Monetary Fund.

The minister said the plea for extra money would be on the agenda when the deputy head of the IMF, Stanley Fischer, visited the country next week.

"The situation in Russia today is by no means simple," Mr Chubais said, adding that as much as $15 billion could be needed to defend the currency. Later there were reports that the IMF visit might be delayed.

Mr Chubais's comments were confirmed by Russia's respected finance minister, Mikhail Zadornov, who named a figure of "at least $10 billion".

Amid a barrage of boos from the conservative bloc in parliament after Mr Chubais's appointment, one MP called the red-headed political survivor from St Petersburg "our great Russian beggar".

Mr Yeltsin brushed aside attacks on Mr Chubais. "For us, more important are the state, the current situation on the world's financial markets, the value of today's rouble," the president said.

A Communist MP, Victor Ilyukhin, said Mr Yeltsin was condemning future generations to a debtors' prison.

The prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, shares Mr Ilyukhin's concern, but blames the previous government's policies of issuing IOUs to foreign lenders, which had to be partly redeemed with fresh IOUs at ever-higher interest rates.

Mr Kiriyenko warned yesterday of "tough and unpopular" measures in the latest stage of his anti-crisis programme, which he will launch next week. It is likely to mean spending cuts, bankruptcies and job losses.

The crisis, which has seen the stock market plunge, interest rates soar to 15 times inflation and central bank reserves fall to critically low levels, is partly of Russia's own making: the government spent more than it earned, borrowed too much short-term "hot" money from the loan sharks of global capital and failed to build a decent banking system.

Just when the economy seemed to be on the mend, the Asian crisis pushed down the price of high-value Russian exports like oil, sending speculative lenders fleeing.

One day after the market euphoria provoked by the United States attempt to rescue the Japanese yen, the announcement that another large, emerging economy was joining Indonesia and South Korea in the queue for IMF crisis credits will raise concern that the fund will not be able to raise the money it needs to hold the line against global devaluation.

Three years ago, when the IMF was pondering what was billed as a "last chance" long-term loan to Russia of $12 billion, its main dilemma was whether the virtue of staving off Russian economic collapse outweighed the evil of effectively financing Mr Yeltsin's savage campaign in Chechenia.

That loan went through. Now there is a new last chance. But the dilemma is whether supporting the progressive government of Mr Kiriyenko, protecting the fragile economic achievements of the Yeltsin years and holding back social unrest in "Indonesia with nukes" outweighs encouraging high-income gambling in emerging markets by punters who expect the IMF to bail them out if things go wrong.

Uncle Lenin to the rescue

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

VLADIMIR Lenin's closest surviving relative, his niece Olga Ulyanova, has appealed to Russia's Communist Party for £70,000 to prevent her being made homeless.

The 76-year-old retired lecturer says she, her daughter and war-invalid husband will lose their Moscow flat unless they can buy out her estranged son-in-law's share.

If he is not paid, he has a legal right to request the family's eviction before putting the flat up for sale.

This is not the first time Mrs Ulyanova has made a public appeal related to her uncle's memory. Last year she denounced proposals to bury Lenin, and raised the prospect of mass revolts if the Soviet Union's founder were removed from his mausoleum in Red Square.

Having helped save her uncle's mummified corpse from eviction, she is banking on him returning the favour. Thanks to their extensive property interests in Moscow, the Communists can easily afford to help, and her appeal to posthumous nepotism looks likely to receive a sympathetic hearing.

"If Olga Ulyanova comes to us with her problems, of course, we will carefully address them and try to help," said Mikhail Polivin, a member of the steering committee of the Moscow City Communist Party. "We would show concern for any of our voters in this situation. This is particularly the case with a relative of the great historical figure Lenin."

Her problems came to light in two letters leaked to a Russian journalist.

In one she asked for cash from the director of the Lenin steel factory in Georgievsk, southern Russia, which doubles as a revolutionary museum. The factory — whose workers have not been paid in months — could not help and passed on her request to party leaders in Moscow.

She also appealed to the Moscow mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, and the Speaker of the Russian parliament's upper house, Yegor Stroyev. They are likely to be less generous for fear of alienating non-Communist voters.

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Goldfish bowled over by kindness

Philip Willan in Rome

THE goldfish of Bologna are looking forward to the middle of next month, when they should see a marked improvement in the quality of their accommodation. For then they will no longer be exposed to the gaze of complete strangers: if their owners are so insensitive as to keep them in a round bowl, they will be obliged to provide them with a suitable place to hide.

The rule is one of 15 measures in a new bylaw to protect domestic animals from cruelty and to propel Bologna into the vanguard of the animal rights culture.

"It may seem mad, but the rule was actually suggested to me by animal rights associations which collaborated in the drafting of the regulations," said Silvia Zamboni, Bologna's environment councillor. "If you don't provide it with somewhere to hide, this animal is condemned to swimming around in circles for the rest of its life.

"It couldn't possibly be happy under those circumstances. Even goldfish have a right to a slightly more complete habitat: they don't live like that in nature."

The rules range from the size of birdcages and kennels to the minimum length of chain for tethering a dog.

"It is absolutely forbidden to keep dogs without providing them with a shelter that is raised from the ground and covered on three sides and by a roof, so that the animals are protected from the elements," says rule six.

Rule 10 says birdcages must, at their widest point, measure at least five times the wingspan of their largest occupant, and at least two and a half times at their narrowest. Where more than three birds are kept, the minimum dimensions are to be increased in proportion.

Bologna has long been renowned for the quality of its local administration and the new regulations reflect the growing influence of Italy's animal rights lobby.

Other rules ban the display of cuddly pets in shop windows — many are traditionally abandoned when their owners depart for a long summer holiday — and the use of pregnant animals and puppies for begging. There is even the startling stricture: "It is forbidden to skin live animals."

The penalties range from £50 to £340. "We have no intention of persecuting people who deal with animals, but aim to increase the sensitivity of our citizens," Ms Zamboni said.

"We have already achieved something positive by making people think about things that they used to take for granted, such as shops where fish slowly suffocate in a couple of inches of water. So far people have reacted very favourably to the initiative."

MPs take pot shot at game reform

Paul Webster in Paris

IN DEFIANCE of the environment minister, Communist and Socialist MPs in the French government coalition turned their backs on their conservationist partners to champion game-shooting as a people's sport yesterday, supporting a rightwing motion to keep July 14 — Bastille Day — as the start of the wildfowl season.

In accordance with a European Union directive, Dominique Voynet wants to change the law to delay the season's opening by six weeks, to September 1. She has already been overruled by the senate, and the national assembly, dominated by the left, is expected to vote the same way today, at the end of a two-day debate.

The prime minister, Lionel Jospin, is among the Socialist leaders who have shown their disapproval of Ms Voynet's decision to follow the European directive.

In backing a rightwing private member's bill to establish the July 14 date in law, the left is supporting a rural working class ready to defend a privilege granted after the 1789 Revolution.

In the past three months the hunting lobby has rallied support, including 200,000 marchers, to fight for the right to shoot migrating birds during the breeding season.

In the regional elections in March pro-hunting candidates, appealing to the country's 2 million licensed hunters, won seats throughout the country.

France's countryside revolt coincided with the start of similar demonstrations in Britain, but there the comparison ends. France's landed gentry and middle classes have left it to the Communist Party to make the running, notably in the north-east, where trains have been stopped and roads blocked.

Maxime Gremetz, a Communist MP from the Somme, a refuge for migrating waterfowl, said tens of thousands of workers feared that Ms Voynet's reform would deprive them of their only leisure activity.

The reform would also close the shooting season a month later, at the end of January. This would bring France into line with a European directive to protect ducks, geese and other migrating waterfowl.

But in rejecting the environment minister's decree, leftwing senators and national assembly deputies have revealed their own fascination with shooting. Although the July 14 motion was proposed by the right, cross-party shooting lobbies gave the lead.

Vincent Peillon, a Socialist MP from the Somme, denied that the left had given into public pressure and criticised Ms Voynet, leader of the Green movement, for refusing to seek a compromise.

"I don't shoot, but I think there is a scandalous contempt in Paris for hunters," he said, echoing other MPs' comments on the city-countryside divide. "You can't look down on 2 million people like that just for cultural reasons. Europe also has to take account of realities."

In the national assembly debate, only the six Green MPs promised to support Ms Voynet.

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Panic lays siege to peace in 'friendly' village

Jonathan Steele in central Kosovo on the neighbourly tolerance that is imploding into slow-motion ethnic cleansing



Police in Belgrade confront parents demonstrating outside the Yugoslav army's headquarters for Serbian soldiers to be withdrawn from Kosovo PHOTOGRAPH: EMIL VAS

THEY were piling as much of the shop's contents into the van as they could. First went the freezer, then bottles of drinks, packets of flour and cooking oil. "Fifty armed men of the Kosovo Liberation Army [KLA] came into the village yesterday and told all of us Serbs to get out," panted Rajko Batic, as he raced in and out of his shop.

Beside him, a friend was lifting a dozen squealing piglets into a trailer. An elderly woman, dressed in black, watched in tears as the frantic loading reached its end. "My son is going. He's leaving me alone," she sobbed.

As the two vehicles roared away, a Serbian village elder denounced the departing pair. "Panic, panic," muttered Milosav Staletic. "We had an agreement with the Albanians that no one would leave, and now they're breaking it."

"We're afraid," said his Albanian friend, a primary school teacher. "If all the Serbs leave, the Serb police may attack this place."

Like a surprising number of villages in Kosovo, this one, which straddles a main road out of Pristina, has remained ethnically mixed throughout the tension of recent months. Villagers described relations between the 70 Serbs and 1,600 Albanians as good.

Now, as tension turns to war, such tolerance is imploding in a kind of slow-motion ethnic cleansing. Just outside the village is a checkpoint manned by the KLA, the rebels fighting for Kosovo's independence. Two miles away on the other side of the village, the blue armoured personnel carriers of the Serb police guard another checkpoint.

Mr Staletic denied the story that 50 KLA men had warned the Serbs to go. His version was that a much smaller KLA group had entered the village, thinking the Serbs had all left and that the Serb police might therefore attack. Mr Staletic, as the Serb elder, summoned Rrustem Gashi, his Albanian counterpart. Mr Gashi told the KLA to leave, he reported.

Across the village green, we found Mr Gashi drinking coffee with a neighbour. "It started last week," he said, "when two Serbs in the village who are police reservists said they were going to leave. 'Why? Is someone bothering you?' I asked them. They told me the police commander at the big checkpoint had ordered them to go. 'What does a man from Belgrade know about the situation? You know better,' I told them."

Mr Gashi is an activist in the Democratic League of Kosovo, the main Albanian political party in the province. He went to the town of Malyshevo to consult party leaders.

"They told me to talk to our Serb neighbours freely. First, ask them to ask the Serb police not to enter the village. Second, ask them not to walk around the village with the guns you know they have at home. Third, tell them you will guarantee that no one touches them."

When Mr Gashi proposed the arrangement to the Serbs, one said he was frightened because he could see KLA people so close to the village. "'Be honest,' I told him. 'Do you watch the Albanian TV news? Who's burning homes and massacring people?'

"He admitted it was the Serbs. We made a deal that if either side heard of attacks, they would tell the other."

The first violation came when the Albanians saw Mr Batic taking his children away. He claimed they were going to see the doctor. But Mr Batic returned without the children. Instead, he brought a van to empty his shop.

"He's betrayed us," Mr Gashi snapped. Only hours after Mr Batic took his children away, six Albanian families also fled. Now the remaining Serbs and Albanians are watching nervously to see if others slip away.

A group of Albanian men sat cross-legged on the village green, listening intently as Mr Gashi claimed his mutual protection deal with the Serbs was still in force. "They can't contradict my agreement."

Osman Gashi, his cousin, was not so sure. "Trust is gone," he said. "The Serbs have made a deal with the police. One day two Serbs in flak jackets came into the shop and drank beer." For his part, he was also moving towards close links with the armed men on the Albanian side.

If all the Serbs left, and the KLA wanted to move their checkpoints so the village was no longer in no man's land but behind the KLA lines, he would support it. "We never thought of ourselves as the resistance, but now we are all KLA," he said.

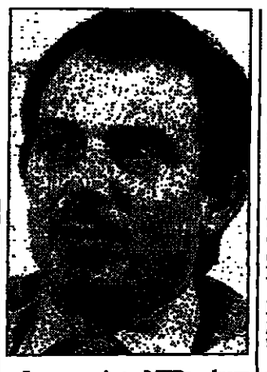
Mr Staletic said he had advised the Serb police of the mutual protection deal. They congratulated him, saying it was "much better if you take care of each other", he said.

He tried to sound optimistic, but the elderly Serb woman was still crying as she wished us Godspeed. Like their Albanian neighbours, they seemed to sense that suspicion and panic were about to overwhelm what remained of their peace.

Rescuing the victims, page 12

Blair embraces Europe with charm offensive

The Europhile/ Stephen Bates in Strasbourg hears a British leader's rare paean to the EU



TONY BLAIR gave the most fervent backing for the European idea by any British prime minister for a quarter of a century yesterday when he addressed MEPs in the European Parliament in Strasbourg for the first time.

In a speech which won warm applause from all but a handful of British Conservatives and disaffected Old Labourites, the prime minister attacked the narrow nationalism of many opponents of the European Union and proclaimed his optimistic pro-Europeanism.

Mr Blair, in words unheard of from a British Prime Minister since the days of Ted Heath, said: "At long last Britain is engaged. It is constructive. We know we have something to give and to learn. Pro-Europe, pro-reform.

"I believe in the European ideal. I want it to live again in the hearts of a new generation. I am optimistic about Europe, about the future of the EU."

Long-serving MEPs drew sharp comparisons between the Prime Minister's emollient performance and those of his predecessors in addressing the parliament. Margaret Thatcher was coldly hostile while John Major was all-but howled down when he spoke at the end of Britain's last EU presidency in 1992.

Mr Blair said: "Britain has come a long way in the past year in its relations with the rest of the EU. The days of the beef war, 14 against one, government positions ravaged by warring factions in the governing party are over.

"To those Conservative MEPs who have organised dissent ... I would simply say: thank you for your interest, but we remember when your party was in charge and we don't want those days back again, not for Britain and not for Europe."

The Prime Minister was in Strasbourg to report to MEPs about this week's Cardiff summit and the outgoing British EU presidency, for which he claimed three achievements: the launch of the single currency, the start of EU enlargement into eastern Europe and the change in British attitudes.

Mr Blair warned that Europe needed reform to appease critics who believe it is too remote and centralised.

"I want to be frank ... there were always two strands of opposition to Europe in Britain and these are reflected throughout Europe ... One is utterly opposed to Europe, come what may, on straightforward nationalist grounds. Here one must simply win the argument for a modern view of how nation states work.

"But the second strand is different: it can support the EU but worries about its direction and its actions. We need a vision for Europe that allows people to feel safe in their national identity whilst reaching out and embracing European partnership. In some areas we will integrate more. In others much more can be done at national, regional and local level."

Vote-hungry Kohl accused of turning sour on Brussels

The Eurosceptic/ Denis Staunton on how grumbling has replaced the visionary rhetoric



GERMANY'S chancellor Helmut Kohl, the man most anti-Europeans blame for the breakneck pace of political and economic integration, was accused yesterday of becoming too nationalistic and going cold on Europe.

During a Bundestag debate on this week's European Union summit in Cardiff, opposition leaders claimed that he was putting his own electoral prospects before the interests of Europe.

"Mr Kohl has abandoned his visionary European rhetoric in recent months in favour of grumbling about too much power going to Brussels and the size of Germany's contribution to the EU budget.

Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, European policy spokeswoman for the Social Democrats, said that if Mr Kohl was unhappy with the financial state of the European Union he had only himself to blame.

"It has been the policy of this government to advance Europe by having Germany pay more. Nowadays it has forgotten all about that," she said.

Mr Kohl said every EU member state defended its national interests, and added that he was determined to avoid the creation of a centralised European state.

But the Green party leader, Joschka Fischer, said Mr Kohl's pro-European policy no longer commanded a majority in his own party, and the new nationalist rhetoric was designed to appeal to "a right-ist fringe in Bavarian beer tents".

Mr Kohl's change of tune may be partly due to his poor showing in the opinion polls, all of which predict his defeat in September's federal election.

He was behind in the polls at the same stage of the 1994 campaign but made an impressive recovery in the final 100 days to retain power with a majority of 10 seats.

Bonn has clashed with Brussels recently over everything from tobacco advertising to book prices, and Mr Kohl has led criticism of the the European Commission for trying to take too much power away from member states.

After years in the vanguard of integration, Germany is blocking reform which would harmonise policies on immigration and asylum. Yesterday Mr Kohl renewed his opposition to a proposed overhaul of the common agricultural policy, which would cut subsidies to German farmers.

Bonn is resisting an EU ban on tobacco advertising on the grounds that health policy is the responsibility of individual states, and rejects the commission's argument that fair competition requires every member to observe the ban.

"The Commission justifies everything nowadays on the basis of the single market. That has to stop," the German health minister, Horst Seehofer, said.

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US offers cautious friendship to Tehran

Ian Black
Diplomatic Editor

THE United States has made its clearest overture yet to Iran on building a new relationship, offering to explore confidence-building steps with its old enemy.

The secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, said Washington could see the prospect of a "very different relationship" even though Tehran continued to pursue policies to which it strongly objected.

"We are ready to explore further ways to build mutual confidence and avoid misunderstandings," she said in a speech given wide advance publicity by the state department. "The Islamic republic should consider parallel steps."

She criticised Iran's support for terrorism and human rights violations, and its efforts to acquire long-range missiles and nuclear weapons. But the overall tone was positive and in one extraordinary passage she suggested that Iran could be included in "multilateral efforts to protect international security" involving the United Nations or other bodies.

Diplomats decribed the speech as the first formal US response to a CNN television interview in January with the moderate Iranian cleric Mohammed Khatami, whose election to president last summer appeared to mark a new post-revolutionary era in Iranian politics.

Since then Washington has eased visa restrictions for Iranians, revised a warning to Americans travelling to Iran, and promoted cultural exchanges that have included a visit by Iranian wrestlers.

Like other Western governments, the US wants to encourage the moderates but not in ways which will expose them to attack by conservatives, who still control the judiciary and key ministries.

"As the wall of mistrust comes down," Mrs Albright said, repeating a phrase used by Mr Khatami in his interview, "we can develop with the Islamic republic — when it is ready — a road map leading to normal relations."

But she immediately encountered an old-style rebuff from a still-suspicous Tehran. The foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi, insisted that the US must change its "hostile policies" before the two countries could normalise relations.

"Until the United States shows that it is ready to have an attitude towards Iran that is based on mutual respect and equality, there won't be very many possibilities for relations," he said during a visit to Madrid.

One diplomat said: "Iranians must welcome this because it is a softening of the US line, but it's such a sensitive issue that they can't just rush into the Americans' arms."



Eritreans expelled from Ethiopia for posing a 'security risk' are welcomed in the border town of Om Hajer. Eritrea attacked the 'witch-hunt' PHOTOGRAPH: SAMI SALLINEN

Ethiopia gears up for offensive as peace stalls

Ethiopia's leader tells **David Gough** *in Addis Ababa that Eritrea will have to pay for bombing raids on civilians*

THE latest border conflict in the Horn of Africa looked set to escalate yesterday as the Ethiopian prime minister, Meles Zenawi, came under increasing pressure to attack Eritrean forces occupying hundreds of square miles of northern Ethiopia.

The danger of renewed hostilities came despite the arrival in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, yesterday of a peace delegation from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The presidents of Burkina Faso, Rwanda and Zimbabwe, and Djibouti's foreign minister, met Mr Zenawi for talks and then flew to the Eritrean capital, Asmara.

Ethiopia and Eritrea are divided on a peace plan devised by the United States and Rwanda. Ethiopia accepts the plan, which calls for its neighbour to withdraw from territory held before a border dispute turned violent six weeks ago. But Western diplomats in Addis Ababa said there was internal opposition.

In an interview with the Guardian, Mr Zenawi denied that Ethiopia was on the verge of launching a military offensive against Eritrean positions. But he said: "If and when the peace initiative fails, we will strike back."

Mr Zenawi said Eritrea "would have to pay" for the bombing of Mekele and Adigrat, in which more than 50 civilians were killed.

The OAU delegation is trying to kick-start the peace process which stalled when Eritrea rejected the four-point US/Rwanda plan. The Eritreans claim that the land they now occupy is theirs and say they have no intention of withdrawing. Ethiopia has accepted the peace initiative and says it will never negotiate with Eritrea while the disputed land is occupied.

An Ethiopian government spokesperson said last week: "There is no country in the world that negotiates under occupation."

The OAU has called on Eritrea to withdraw its forces but it appears unlikely that Asmara will agree to a precondition to talks that it had previously rejected.

Mr Zenawi said Ethiopia had done all it could to support the various peace efforts. "The ball is firmly in Eritrea's court."

Mr Zenawi insisted that his government was united. "We have absolute consensus within the cabinet on our approach to this crisis."

But Western diplomatic sources said that Mr Zenawi has come under increasing pressure from his party, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, to alter his strategy.

Over the last week, Ethiopia has engaged in a mass mobilisation of military resources with thousands of regular and militia forces being bussed to the frontline.

The talk in northern Ethiopia is of impending war.

While stressing that his government will continue to pursue peace through negotiation, Mr Zenawi was confident of prevailing over Eritrea.

Ethiopians feel deeply betrayed by what they see as an unacceptable act of aggression on the part of their former ally. A government spokesperson in the north of the country said: "I cannot describe the sense of betrayal we feel at this unprovoked attack. How can we forgive them for murdering our children while they were at school."

Clinton names heavyweight for UN job

Mark Tran in New York

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton yesterday nominated the hard-charging Richard Holbrooke as the new US envoy to the United Nations, an appointment expected to galvanise the organisation.

Mr Holbrooke, 57, is to succeed Bill Richardson, who is to become energy secretary.

The gregarious Mr Richardson, a former congressman, was well-liked but made little impact in just over a year at the UN. Mr Holbrooke is a diplomatic heavyweight, the man who knocked heads together to broker the Dayton peace accord on Bosnia.

'He flatters, he lies, he humiliates: he is a sort of brutal and schizophrenic Mazarin' a French diplomat said

If confirmed by the Senate, the ambitious Mr Holbrooke will hold the number two foreign policy position in the Cabinet after the secretary of state Madeleine Albright.

But at a ceremony at the White House Rose Garden, Mr Holbrooke was at pains to emphasise his good relations with a team that also includes the national security adviser Sandy Berger and the defence secretary William Cohen.

Mr Holbrooke has a reputation as a brilliant, but often undiplomatic diplomat and a difficult colleague. During a long career, he has made a long list of enemies through his abrasive style.

But few question his talent and effectiveness.

In his book about the Bosnian conflict, To End a War, Mr Holbrooke showed that he brooked little patience for military commanders who refused to take risks and he was scathing in describing the pettiness of the Croatian, Serbian and Muslim leaders.

In his book, Mr Holbrooke cannot resist reprinting a description comparing him to France's Cardinal Mazarin. "He flatters, he lies, he humiliates: he is a sort of brutal and schizophrenic Mazarin," a French diplomat told the French paper, Le Figaro, during the Dayton talks.

He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for Bosnia, but did not win.

Asked recently whether his book will go into a British edition, he quipped: "I think David Owen's memoirs saturated the market."

Mr Holbrooke is believed to covet Mrs Albright's job and stories about his vaulting ambition abound.

Foreign service officers tell how he once asked a career adviser either how to become an ambassador or assistant secretary before he was 35, or how to become secretary of state. He eventually became the youngest assistant secretary for at least 40 years.

No one working for Mr Holbrooke found it fun or easy. A colleague, Evelyn Colbert, once had to remind him that it was inappropriate to shout at her, someone older than his mother.

But Mrs Colbert said that she learned more from him in three years than in her 37-year diplomatic career, saying he was "absolutely brilliant with a tremendous sense of politics and policy".

Mr Holbrooke, who cultivates the media assiduously, faces particular challenges at the UN. He has to hold together a fraying coalition on Iraq with France and Russian, who are impatient for an end to sanctions. He also has to persuade Congress to pay about $1 billion (£600 million) in back payments to the UN.

Mr Clinton said of Mr Holbrooke yesterday: "He will help us to shape a UN that is leaner, more efficient, better-equipped, and fulfills the best ideals of its founders, and meets the challenges of the 21st century."

Turks send fighter jets into Cyprus as tension mounts

Suleyman Erguclu
in Lefkoniko

SIX Turkish F-16 war planes flew into northern Cyprus yesterday in the latest exercise in brinkmanship between Turkey and Greece.

The heavily armed jets landed at a small Turkish Cypriot airport in Lefkoniko where anti-aircraft guns guarded the runway.

Three of the planes later left. They circled low over the airport before heading back towards Turkey.

The arrival of the aircraft angered the Cypriot government on the south of the divided island. "We will protest the violation of our airspace to the United Nations," a Greek Cypriot military source said.

The deployment was in retaliation for an unprecedented visit by four Greek F-16s and two C-130 transport planes to an air base in southern Cyprus this week.

The Turkish prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, warned Greek Cypriots that they would come off worse if friction grew. Tension has increased since the Cypriot government said it planned to install Russian S-300 anti-aircraft missiles in southern Cyprus later this year. — *Reuters*

Horror of a child sex witch-hunt in Happy Valley

Christopher Reed in Los Angeles on the lives shattered by false charges

THE APPLE blossom set against the backdrop of the Cascade mountains brought Wenatchee fourth place in a 1990 guide to America's nicest small town. They called it Happy Valley. Today the town, 150 miles east of Seattle in Washington state, is known for the Wenatchee witch-hunt, a four-year reign of terror that imprisoned many innocent people, ruined lives and shattered families.

An incredible 29,000 charges of child rape and molestation (1,000 more than Wenatchee's population) were brought against 47 adults. The accusations involved 60 children. Ten people were convicted, 18 pleaded guilty, 16 were jailed and three were acquitted. Yet not one conviction succeeded against defendants who hired their own lawyers.

A jury was yesterday listening to final arguments in a civil case resulting from the witch-hunt. But even after the verdict, Wenatchee's troubles will not be over. The town's only sex-crime investigator, the recently transferred police patrolman Robert Perez, interrogated children for hours, hauled in their parents and shouted obscenities at them. Most accusations came from Mr Perez's foster daughters. D.E., then aged eight, and M.E., aged 10 — the biological daughters of the first couple he arrested.

In an official report on Wenatchee, a public defender wrote, in a play on words, that it was Mr Perez who "has abused the children in order to persecute the adults".

One persecuted adult was Linda Miller. Mr Perez brought her into his office just after midnight and questioned her for three hours. By the time it was over she had told him her daughter had attended orgies in a church basement. She recanted almost immediately, but in her trial she pleaded guilty to a charge of child molestation and was jailed until an appeal brought her release in March.

Mr Perez now sits in the defendant's chair, along with three fellow officers and two town officials, in a $62 million civil lawsuit brought by four acquitted adults. The state's department of social and health services is also named and if the jury, expected to reach a verdict next week, makes a full award, Wenatchee could be bankrupted.

But bankruptcy is the least of the catastrophes that have befallen victims of the witch-hunt. Robert Devereaux, who helped his wife run a foster home for girls, expelled D.E. for unruliness. She named him as one of the 63 adults she accused of sex offences.

Mr Devereaux was charged with 670 counts of rape and molestation. Then he engaged a lawyer. Suddenly the charges were reduced to obstruction and once spanking a child, which he admitted.

Two plaintiffs in the present case are a pastor, the Reverend Robert Roberson, and his wife, Connie. They presided over the town's tiny Pentecostal Church of God. Among their congregation were D.E. and M.E., and both told Mr Perez a bizarre story. They said Rev Roberson would commit sex acts with children in his pulpit and, as the congregation shouted "hallelujah", would declare: "That's how you get the devil out." On Friday nights they would all supposedly retire to the basement where everyone undressed and children were passed around for sex acts.

After several months in prison, the Robersons were tried and acquitted of 14 sex acts against children, including their own five-year-old daughter. The couple are £60,000 in debt and are still trying to get their daughter back.

Indeed, a dozen or more children remain separated from their parents. D.E. and M.E. have recanted, but their parents, who are both illiterate, remain in jail after pleading guilty to numerous sex acts with minors. Their five children are in care.

Fewer cases would have been pursued without the cooperation of a mental hospital in Idaho. In 1995, Samantha Doggett, then aged 16, visited the Wenatchee child welfare offices to help with a report, made by her parents, that her adolescent brother and sister were having sex.

She has testified that she was strapped to a stretcher, taken to the hospital and kept there as a "voluntary" patient. She fled and spent almost two years on the run, all the time maintaining that her parents, who were accused of molestation, were innocent.

Their 11-year jail terms were overturned last year. Yet they were only released on bail this month, and the authorities are considering seeking to overturn their appeal.

Almost all the convicted adults were poor and poorly educated. They and the children appear to have been browbeaten by Mr Perez's ferocious interrogations. Jeannie Bendt's six-year-old son spent six weeks in "therapy" after being named as a victim. Ms Bendt said he left as a cheerful, bright little boy.

She visited the child welfare offices to discuss his case but was flabbergasted to find Mr Perez waiting there. He announced that he "knew" she had molested her son.

Ms Bendt said he kept asking: "Did you have sex with him? How many times . . . Did you do it 30 times a day?"

"I said, 'Yeah, yeah whatever,' and I was laughing inside because I didn't think any of it would stick."

Stick it did. As she had signed a confession she was advised to plead guilty. She was sentenced to 16 years in jail. Her appeal was rejected.

Mr Perez admits he may have made mistakes but says he was doing his best. He insists: "If you look at the facts it makes sense, and it's not bizarre. It's horrible, but it happened."



Wenatchee mother Linda Miller (left) hugs friends after her release from jail. Police patrolman Robert Perez (below right) insists orgies took place in the town. The Rev. Robert Robeson (below) cleared of charges he conducted child-sex orgies in his church basement. PHOTOGRAPHS: ROSS W HAMILTON, KELLY GILLIN AND BOB ELLIS

Analysis
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Analysis
The economy

The trends are confusing — inflation and joblessness up, manufacturing in trouble, but hi-tech and service sectors doing fine. **Victor Keegan** reads the charts

Steering a course between boom and bust

YESTERDAY'S figures showing an unexpected 1.7 per cent surge in spending in the shops in May have added a new twist to the question — what on earth is going on in the economy at the moment? Are we heading for a recession or a period of "stagflation" (high prices, low output and rising unemployment)? Or will the measures already taken — rising interest rates and increased taxes — restore the economy to an even keel?

Unemployment, as measured by the numbers claiming benefit, is starting to rise after years of near-continuous decline. This could suggest that the policies already adopted will slow the economy down. The trouble is wages — increases broke the five per cent barrier this week — are soaring away while at the same time manufacturers are complaining of being squeezed to the bone.

The Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury David Heathcoat-Amory said yesterday that the British economy was experiencing boom and bust at the same time. Few would argue with him — though his diagnosis that "while the financial services and retail sectors are growing strongly, manufacturing has been pushed into recession by six interest rises and a strong pound" is contested by Labour Ed Balls, Gordon Brown's economic adviser argues that interest rates take well over a year to work on the economy and the current high street spending spree is the result of Tory laxity in not putting rates up faster 15 months or so ago.

So just what happening? In Britain the Government wants us to spend less and take lower pay increases — which we are stubbornly refusing to do. In Japan it is the opposite. The whole world wants the Japanese to start spending their way out of recession, but instead they are squirreling away even more money in their already huge savings accounts. (One of the few products for which sales are booming is safes to lock your cash away in).

In Britain very few experts, least of all in the Treasury, predicted the recession at the end of the 1980s and hardly anyone in the world, least of all the International Monetary Fund, forecast this year's crisis in East Asia or foresaw the length of the Japanese recession. At the end of 1996, none of the pundits in the City predicted the shares boom of 1997 let alone 1998. Nearly all thought shares would fall in 1997; in fact, they rose by 25 per cent. Some mistake.

Are we now facing an unexpectedly large recession as happened twice in the 1980s or a "soft landing"? It depends what indicators you choose. The whole economy (the sum of all the goods and services produced) grew by 2.9 per cent in the year to the first quarter of 1998(1). This marked a slowing down from the 3.1 per cent in 1997 (good news) but it was still above the rate (about 2.2 per cent) at which the UK economy is reckoned capable of growing without generating inflation.

And since the first quarter the annual rate of price inflation has worsened further, and wage inflation (5.2 per cent) has reached disquieting levels and is totally out of line with other European countries with whom we compete.

Higher inflation wouldn't matter if it was offset by higher productivity. But recently — and this is arguably the most worrying trend of all — it hasn't. Wage costs (per unit of output) in manufacturing have risen from 1.8 per cent a year ago to a potentially calamitous 6.1 per cent in March. Companies are paying ever higher wages for diminishing output per worker.

House prices are important because they fuel inflation and lead to consumers paying out more of their increased wealth. City analysts HSBC (2) reckons that 20 per cent of the increase in consumer spending is explained by rising house prices. Housing inflation is now showing signs of coming off the boil, but it has been surging for several years even though it is difficult to measure. The Halifax index (disproportionately wedded to sales in the north) shows a rise of only five per cent in the last year, while figures from the Nationwide (biased towards the south) indicates a rise of 12 per cent.

This shows up another vital feature of this recession. It depends who you are, where in Britain you live, and what your line of work is, as there are now lots of different regional economies. If you live in Newton Stewart in Scotland, the claimant unemployment rate is 14.9 per cent, while in the small town of Bicester in mellow Oxfordshire it's only 1.5 per cent(3) which in reality means no joblessness at all. If you work in the private sector, average earnings have gone up by an unsustainable 5.6 per cent in the past year. For public sector employees, the average increase was only 2.5 per cent (unsustainable for different reasons). Those in the City, in "financial intermediation" where incomes rose by 47.5 per cent between last October and March, won't even know how to spell the word recession. And if you're on the payroll at Goldman Sachs, where 200 partners could receive £60 million each from the proposed flotation, you need never worry again about any recession.

Service industries — finance, tourism, banking, construction and computing — are still booming, while manufacturing is facing a repetition of what has happened twice before in recent years when governments used the blunt instrument of high interest rates to curb spending and inflation.

This has the side effect of raising the value of the pound and diminishing industry's international competitiveness. Peter Tomlinson, managing director of IOSIS, supplier of components for embedded computer systems — regarded as an advance indicator of investment in productivity improvement — said yesterday: "Three months ago we saw a downturn which suggests that within six months there will be a recession in manufacturing."

Manufacturing these days accounts for less than 20 per cent of Britain's economic activity, but it is still important because it is responsible for primary wealth creation (subsequently spent in the service industries), and most of our exports.

With such confusing indicators does it make sense to raise interest rates yet again before we fully know the effects of the six increases already made since Labour won the election? Chancellor Gordon Brown is able to wash his hands of this decision on the grounds that he has hived off responsibility to the independent monetary committee at the Bank of England.

However, this is a tad disingenuous because, as the Bank often reminds him in coded language, if he had increased taxes by more in his budget in order to dampen consumer spending, then it may not have been necessary to raise interest rates by so much to do the same job. Brown is doubly worried about sinking into recession because he has pledged that Labour will avoid the Stop-Go of the Tory years. In any case, a recession would be the worst possible environment in which to launch his flagship policy — encouraging the young and the long-term unemployed into jobs through the Welfare-to-Work initiative.

But there is more than Gordon Brown's credibility at issue here. What is also on trial is the efficacy of the reforms started under Mrs Thatcher. The aim of the policy of privatisation — inward investment, market deregulation and reform of the labour markets — was to boost productivity and lower inflation so Britain could enjoy sustained periods of non-inflationary growth.

The fact that wage inflation is now surging unsustainably ahead of what is happening on the continent of Europe, and in excess of productivity improvements in the UK, must raise questions about the degree to which past structural changes have been effective.

High wage inflation can no longer be blamed on union power or national pay bargaining. It has happened because employers, whether bargaining with unions or not, are agreeing inflationary wage settlements (not least when they receive their own increases in the boardroom).

They have ignored the Chancellor's frequent appeals for restraint, thereby allowing private sector pay to soar ahead of pay increases in the public sector where fierce restraint has been imposed by the Government, resulting this year in increases less than the rise in inflation.

Is there an alternative? Few economists except such experts as John Grieve Smith of Robinson College, Cambridge, are calling for some form of "incomes policy", a phrase that has disappeared almost completely from the language of New Labour and the unions.

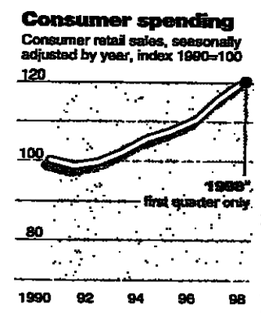
John Philpott, director of the independent Employment Policy Institute has urged(4) more concerted wage bargaining accompanied by a structured national debate on the outlook for the economy of pay increases. Otherwise, there is a conspicuous absence of argument on a subject that once dominated economic debate.

It could be that wage pressures will subside once the bonus season is over and when the economy itself slows down further. But the underlying problem — how the UK economy can be run at a faster speed for sustained periods without generating inflation is stubbornly unresolved. It will have to be sorted out before we can safely join Europe's monetary union where wage inflation is simply not the same kind of problem

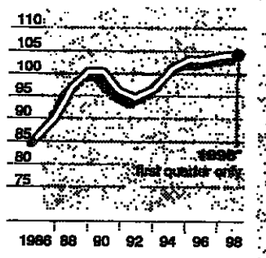
Sources: (1). National Statistics Office; press release May 22, 1998. (2) HSBC; UK Economic Watch, June 1 1998 (3) Labour Market Trends; NSO (4) Making Pay Work; Employment Policy Institute, February 1998
Graphic sources: NSO; Halifax.
Graphics: Finbarr Sheehy; Matt Buck; Paddy Allen
Research: Jane Crinnion
Victor Keegan is the Guardian's chief leader writer, and an economics commentator.

What the indicators tell us

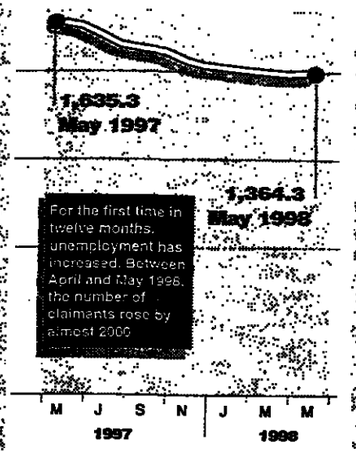
Consumer spending
Consumer retail sales, seasonally adjusted by year, index 1990=100

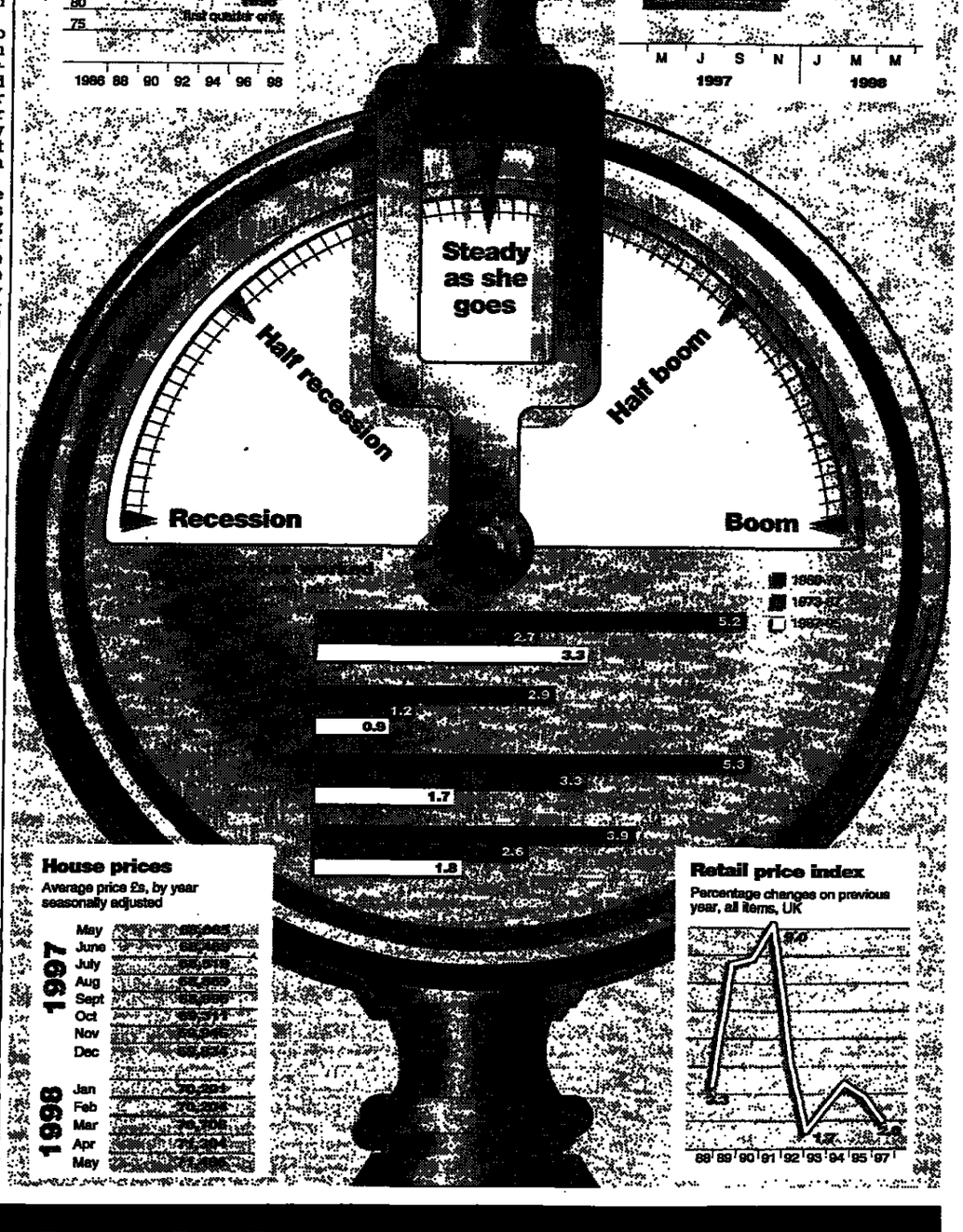


Manufacturing output
UK, Index 1990=100



Unemployment
Claimant numbers, 000s seasonally adjusted





House prices
Average price £s, by year seasonally adjusted

Retail price index
Percentage changes on previous year, all items, UK

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Comment

Diary

Simon Bowers

AUBERON Waugh, editor of the Literary Review, flew back from Australia recently to find former British PoWs demanding an apology from Japanese Emperor Akihito. "As I left Australia last weekend," he mused in the Sunday Telegraph, "it seemed an extraordinarily cheerful place." Adding that he found Australia to be "involved in an orgy of apology, as white Australians busily sign 'Sorry' books for the benefit of the Aborigines." The "nasty old men in the Mall," suggests Waugh, would do well to learn from this — "English males can be rather odd about apologies." They can indeed. One English male, reports the Sidney Morning Herald, was forced to apologise to Aborigine communities during a recent visit, for comparing them to "a swarm of locusts". He also said they "practise infanticide as a form of birth control," and that they "had not progressed in the 4,000 years since Stonehenge." Can you guess who it was? We call the literary doyen to ask if he ever tires of controversy. "Oh, it's something I wrote 10 years ago," he laughs. "I am not ashamed of it all. It was rather funny, and quite true, actually." But you apologised, didn't you? "Oh, some sod wrote a nasty article about me which left me looking a bit silly, so I signed one of those 'Sorry' books. It's that Sorry Week over there at the moment you know."

TODAY, as promised, the Diary brings you more on Siobhain MacDonagh. Last Saturday the MP for Mitcham and Morden said some MPs were "green with envey" at Diary hero Andrew Mackinlay's high media profile. In an effort to redress the balance we have asked her to comment freely on a subject entirely of her own choosing. "Well this week," she (rather presumptuously) begins, "I'd like to plug the fact that there are 3,000 extra hospital beds available for patients who need them. And may I just say, it's very important for the regional press to report what goes on in an MP's constituency." You can, Siobhain, and you have. Next week: how Siobhain won Brownie points with Alistair Campbell at Number 10. Meanwhile, our competition to find the most sycophantic MP in town continues. (Male nominations particularly welcome).

A SENSE of humour is an important part of any job, and it is pleasing to see those in charge of the Dounreay nuclear complex not taking themselves too seriously. Despite recent question marks over some weapons-grade uranium which has gone missing, they have begun a new marketing initiative which sees Homer Simpson promoting the installation's good name. For those unfamiliar with television's Mr Simpson, he is a cartoon character who lives and works in the fictional atomic plant town of Springfield, USA. The cartoon's opening credits show bungling Homer unwittingly leaving the plant with a uranium rod in his pocket and carelessly dropping it down a drain outside his home.

FROM one reassuring nuclear power station anecdote to another. After evidence of corrosion was spotted in the upper reaches of brand new power station Sizewell B, an inquiry was ordered, and the construction scientists were consulted. Steel in reinforced concrete, they assured the inquiry, cannot rust — special chemicals in the concrete prevents it. Detailed analysis followed and the scientists were alarmed to detect an erroneous substance was causing the problem. Long days spent 300 feet up scaffolding at Sizewell, miles from the nearest toilet . . . the scientists were baffled as to what mystery ingredient the builders had managed to pour into the concrete mix.

THE Windsors' new spinman Simon Lewis, to be appointed next week, has already impressed the Palace at interview. Which Fleet Street editors, he was asked, did he know? "I only know one," he answered. "I met him on holiday — Stuart Kelner. He edits the Sun."



We must rescue the oppressed of Kosovo. And here's how to do it

Jonathan Steele



NATO is facing a dilemma over whether to intervene in the war-torn Serbian province of Kosovo. It knows there is an overwhelming moral and humanitarian case for stepping in to halt the excessive use of force and the unwarranted repression of civilians by Serb police and Yugoslav troops. It knows that the diplomatic arguments in favour of giving the Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic, yet more time to clean up his act are weak.

What seems to be holding Nato back, after all the brave talk of the past two weeks, is a combination of two factors. The first is concern over the legal basis of intervention and the difficulty of getting support from the United Nations Security Council in the face of potential Russian and Chinese vetoes.

The second, which comes from the military planners, is doubt over how easy it would be to take on the Yugoslav air force and its defences in the case of Nato air strikes, or the Serb ground forces in the case of Nato airborne landings.

Military planners are bound to be cautious, and similar arguments were heard before the multinational coalition's intervention against Iraq seven years ago. The inventory of the Iraqi forces looked formidable. They had had recent combat experience during the long air and ground war with Iran.

Yet, when faced with the might of Western power, the Iraqi army and air force turned out to be paper tigers. They folded up within days. Young conscripts were not ready to die for a cause which they did not fully believe in. The officer corps was less professional than it was thought to be. And of course the technological superiority of the allied forces was vast.

The same factors are even more likely to hold true for the forces of Yugoslavia. They have had no real experience of contested war, let alone of successfully defending positions. In the operations against Croatia in 1991 and 1992 they had the advantage of surprise and superior force.

With war in Kosovo already under way, there are reports of desertions. Several hundred Serbian mothers demonstrated this week to have their conscript sons brought home.

The parliament of Montenegro, the second republic of Yugoslavia after Serbia, has voted to withdraw its conscripts because it cannot support Mr Milosevic's reckless use of force in Kosovo. Faced with air strikes or ground landings, the chances are that the Yugoslav forces and Serb police would crumble.

The more difficult issue is the legality of outside intervention. Under chapter six of the United Nations charter foreign powers can move in when an individual state's actions threaten regional peace and security. A strong argument can be made to justify this, as Britain has been trying to do with the resolution it is canvassing before the Security Council. This calls for "all necesary measures" to be taken against Yugoslavia.

Will Russia and China accept it? A key reason why Moscow objects is its lingering anger over the decision to exclude Russia from equal partnership in Europe's post-cold-war security set-up by expanding Nato. Those in the West who argued against Nato's expansion now have further evidence to support the warnings they gave before it happened. The Russians would inevitably see it as directed against them.

But the milk has been spilt, and life must go on. One way round Russia's objections to action in Kosovo could be to stop describing the operation as a Nato force. Robin Cook has taken the moral and political lead in pressing for intervention, with the vital support of Tony Blair. France, too, seems firmly of the view that only superior force will stop the humanitarian disaster caused by the Yugoslav strategy of relying on force to crush the Kosovo Albanians' aspirations.

Why not, therefore, create a European Intervention Force, an ad hoc coalition of the kind which fought in the Gulf rather than a full Nato operation? It would need United States participation, whether in terms of logistics, aircraft, satellite intelligence, and the loan of command-and-control facilities. But it would be clearly under joint Anglo-French command.

IT'S legal and political mandate could derive from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which is formally linked to the United Nations as a regional assembly of Eurasian states. No one has a formal veto in the OSCE and the Russians are full members of it, unlike with Nato. Indeed, the Russians have been trying to build up the OSCE's security role, and this could be a chance for them to strengthen it.

What is certain is that, without some form of intervention in Kosovo, today's low-intensity war will continue to escalate. The Serb and Yugoslav police and military forces are likely to go on attacking villages with excessive force. The Albanian majority in Kosovo will increasingly turn to the Kosovo Liberation Army to protect it. In a matter of months a small group of armed men has grown into a nationwide insurgency. Some of the KLA's initial activities in 1996 and 1997, such as assassinating alleged collaborators, could be described as terrorism. But now, as peasants seek arms to defend their land and homes, like an earlier generation in Yugoslavia they have become partisans.

The Serbs claim not to be occupiers. But as long as they insist that 10 per cent of the population should govern the remaining 90 per cent and deny them the right to self-rule or self-determination, Kosovo's Albanians as well as the outside world will rightly define them as a colonial power.

In Europe the days of colonialism are over. Mr Milosevic could end the war swiftly enough by accepting that. By his actions of the past nine years and especially of the past nine weeks he has thrown away the chance of keeping it within Kosovo. If he is genuine about negotiating a political solution, the issue of Kosovo's future status must be a legitimate subject for the talks, whether as a third republic of Yugoslavia, or if its people so decide in a referendum, as an independent state with full guarantees for its Serb and other minorities. The dissolution of Yugoslavia has seen several new states emerge in Europe, and the birth of a state of Kosovo would not be a radical departure. Mr Milosevic and those Serbs who support him (many do not) have only themselves to blame for pushing the majority of Kosovans to the wall.

Decca Aitkenhead will return next week

Not laughing but dying

Bill Buford

TWO weeks ago I had the chance to look through an archive of Jack Kerouac photographs — most of them of the young Kerouac, 20-something, a friend of Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs. So many were the same pose. The filterless cigarette dangling from the mouth, the Jack London cocked head, that knowing urban smirk. The man was performing. Jack Kerouac had devised the role of Jack Kerouac long before anyone knew who he was; but to see that role, acted and re-enacted, was curiously diminishing. This was — what? A portrait of the artist as an imitation Humphrey Bogart? Or as simply a prat?.

Another self-portrait in Kerouac's journals is to be published later this year.

It was always the belief, perpetrated by Kerouac himself, that his most famous novel, On The Road, was written in three weeks, in a spontaneous, unrevised, Benzedrine explosion of creativity. Well, maybe. The journals reveal that a draft of the book was carefully written first as notes of a journey round America made with Neal Cassidy. Ginsburg and Burroughs also figure in the journals. This for instance: "Ginsberg went mad tonight and begged me to hit him. He wanted to know 'what else' there could be in the world that didn't involve him . . . I was riven by the spectacle of his mad meaningless eyes staring at me."

But mainly these early pages are about the idea of being a writer. The appeal of the journals is in the unabashed, unapologetic vitality of its narrator — naive, irrepressible and utterly unembarrassed. It is a sloppy Walt Whitman-like celebration of being young and American and in New York. "I walk in darkness," Kerouac writes in the summer of 1949. "I want to communicate with Dostoyevski in heaven, and ask old Melville if he's still discouraged, and Wolfe why he let himself die at 38. I don't want to give up. I promise I shall never give up, and that I'll die yelling and laughing."

OR THIS: "I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-minded ecstatic Negroes of America." This is a kind of urban pantheism — no irony, pure celebration — and in its way rather wonderful.

At Kerouac's death in 1969, at 47 years old, he was distinctly out of favour. His widow, Stella Sampas, was so fed up with the critics that she shoved Kerouac's manuscripts (including his journals) into the attic in a box, having scrawled across the top, "Review this, you bastards."

Kerouac in later years was a different man from the young unpublished novelist. You see it in the pictures. The self-consciousness has gone. So, too, have the looks. This is more slathering sloppy slob than male model, a disintegrating alcoholic, righwing, redneck, red-eyed, no longer in possession of his role. So goes the legend. I now realise he was so much worse.

THE man was a monster. Only filth came out of his mouth — filth or racism, especially directed to niggers and yids. He drank a litre of bourbon a day plus a six pack of Colt 45 malt liquor. When he was 45, in Italy, he realised that he needed another wife (he'd had a couple already): he went there at the invitation of his Italian publishers, Mondadori; on the flight to London, he was so drunk that police were called to escort him off the plane; by the time he reached Italy, there were doctors waiting to sedate him with morphine. He peed everywhere: in an alley, in the street, in a television studio, on someone's kitchen floor. He propositioned every woman he met. When Ann Charters, his future biographer, showed up to interview him, he cornered her, told her to have sex with him or he'd masturbate on the spot. Given his state — it occurred to him one hung-over morning — who was going to look after his poor mother? And that was when the long-suffering Stella Sampas stepped in: Jack asked her to marry him; she, unhappy soul, agreed.

They fought. Furniture, televisions, pieces of china. At the end of one fight, he wanted sex, not forthcoming.

> Kerouac became a monster. Only filth or racism came out of his mouth

and so he raped her, his own wife, so viciously that she was taken to hospital. When a friend appeared afterwards, he took him upstairs to show off the blood on the floor, and then dropped his trousers. Who would have thought, he said, pointing down to his shrivelled penis, that such a wee little thing could have done so much damage. And then on October 19, 1969, his veins, weakened from alcohol, simply burst, and he died.

And out of this darkness comes the journals that Stella had kept back. Maybe she wasn't merely protecting her husband from his critics. Maybe it was impossible for her to read of such vital innocence; maybe it was simply impossible to reconcile the two Kerouacs. "I promise," the young Jack Kerouac had written to the older one, "I promise I shall never give up, and that I'll die yelling and laughing."

You people at the *Guardian* try to hit the emotional spot by putting me in the dock

Twaddle to you

Chris Woodhead

A SERIOUS newspaper challenges its readers' assumptions. It takes nothing for granted, least of all its own latent prejudices. It argues the case. It cares about the truth of the evidence it deploys. A second-rate paper plays to the lowest common denominator of what it takes to be its readers' views. It seeks simply to hit the emotional spot, to confirm the prejudice, to engender the warm glow of solidarity. In so doing, it does not bother to check the evidence. Truth, accuracy, fairness are all irrelevant.

Decca Aitkenhead's column in last Friday's Guardian ("On examination, Chris Woodhead's Ofsted is a very expensive flop") is a classic example of the latter approach.

I would say that, wouldn't I? It is I, after all, who am in the dock. Why, it Ofsted is inefficient, should this not be exposed? Why, if we are wasting £150 million a year of taxpayers' money, should not the Guardian do all it can to publicise the scandal? Why not indeed?

If the allegations were true, I would be the first to agree that they merited the widest possible debate. But they are not. No, Aitkenhead's catalogue of woe can be refuted item by item. I will send our detailed response to any reader who cares to contact me at Ofsted.

The really interesting issue, thinking about the generality of the Guardian's education coverage since the election, is why the paper sees fit to publish twaddle of this kind. When, as a Guardian reader rather then the chief inspector, am I going to find a serious discussion of accountability in the public sector and school inspection in particular? It is questions like these which I want to see explored.

Do parents not have a right to know what is happening in the schools their children attend or might attend? When schools fail (and I assume that everyone accepts that some do) is it the fault of the Government for not funding them properly? Is it the inevitable consequence of the social and economic problems of the communities they serve? Might it not have something to do with factors internal to the school, like the quality of leadership and teaching? Is it not important that problems in such schools are brought out into the open so that solutions can be found? Is it not equally important that we know which schools and teachers are doing an outstanding job so that we can give them the credit and public recognition they so richly deserve?

> When Ofsted makes mistakes, we act quickly to put them right

The discussion needs to move beyond the triteness of the accusation that the goal is to name and shame. The aim is rather to reveal what is going wrong so that solutions to problems can be found. Schools which fail Ofsted inspections are schools where the management has lost control and where the LEA has failed to take action.

In an ideal world these things would not happen. In an ideal world we could abandon inspection in favour of what Professor Brighouse, my colleague on David Blunkett's Standards Task Force, terms "appreciative enquiry". We could leave it to the educational establishment to deal with failure in private. But we do not live in an ideal world. There are schools where, sadly, there is not much to appreciate, and where, inexcusably, nobody has done anything to prevent children who often have nothing else in their lives going for them, generation after generation, receiving an utterly inadequate education.

Ofsted on occasion, of course, makes mistakes. The point is that we act quickly to put them right. I am certain that the quality of inspection improves year by year. It is not, and never will be, perfect, but the vast majority of inspections are acknowledged by schools to be rigorous, professional and as unthreatening as it is possible to make them.

Those who were inclined to accept Ms Aitkenhead's indictment might reflect on the fact that only three in every 100 inspections result in a complaint. Inspection is never going to be popular. It reveals that some schools, whatever their social circumstance, are giving their children a wonderful education. It prompts the question as to why, if they can do it, others cannot. It reveals, moreover, inadequacies in teacher training and LEA support to schools and threatens, therefore, powerful vested interests and prominent figures. So be it.

We have challenged defensiveness and complacency, and, however uncomfortable it might be for all of us, myself included, we shall go on doing just that. The culture in education is changing and changing for the better. I hope in the coming months that the Guardian will make its own powerful contribution to the transformation in educational standards that is now within our reach.

Chris Woodhead is HM chief Inspector of schools



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'My daughter was the only one to have her bags searched'
C Pugh, Letters

A milestone for the poor

But what of the future?

THE FIRST and most important thing about yesterday's minimum wage statement is that it is truly an historic occasion. For the first time in Britain there is a floor beneath which wages are not legally allowed to fall and the same minimum will apply across the country so cowboy employers can be in no doubt what it is. Two million people will be removed from the worst of poverty wages.

That is a major milestone — ethical as much as economic — along the unending road to remove poverty and it ill-deserved some of the disparaging comments from union leaders yesterday. For the TGWU to describe it as "an endorsement of workplace poverty and a green light to the bad employer" and the GMB to say it is "a slap in the face" for Britain's youngsters is unworthy of them. Sure, practically everyone — except the usual crop of carping Conservative backbenchers yesterday — would like the minimum wage to be higher, but it makes practical sense to introduce it gradually to make sure it doesn't lead to politically unacceptable levels of unemployment, particularly among young people.

A minimum wage of £3.60 an hour (with a phased introduction of £3.20 for youngsters) must not be seen as an end in itself. It is not a decent living wage, but it should be judged with two things in mind. First, it must be seen against other measures, including the Working Families Tax Credit, with which a lone parent with one child working a 35-hour week would be on £6 an hour, not £3.60p, once the tax credit, housing benefit and child benefit are added to basic pay. Second, this is the beginning of an on-going process to be monitored by a continuing Low Pay Commission. If, as we hope, it turns out that the minimum wage has little effect on unemployment, then the commission should not hesitate to say that the minimum level should be raised.

What is more worrying is whether the Government will accept its future recommendations in view of its reduction of the starting rate for 18- to 20-year-olds from £3.20 to £3 and the extension of it to 21-year-olds. Instead the new rate will be phased in over two years. The Government plausibly argues that it has not rejected the commission's recommendations but merely phased them in over a longer period so as not to risk worsening youth unemployment at a time when it is launching its Welfare-to-Work initiative. It points out that it has accepted practically all of the commission's 24 recommendations and that many youngsters are facing increases of up to 50 per cent in their earnings. That's fine but if the exemptions don't amount to much then why did the Government dilute any of the commission's thorough report which carved an authoritative consensus out of the conflicting claims of both sides of industry and the low-pay lobbies? More ominously, the Government hasn't confirmed an automatic rise in the minimum from £3.60 to £3.70 after one year. This suggests that the commission may have a fight on its hands if it decides to raise the minimum wage in future.

None of this should obscure the significance of this radical redistribution of income for the poorest paid. However the poor don't live in a vacuum. They see around them average earnings rising by 5 per cent a year and the fat cats in the board rooms rewarding themselves with increases that must seem to the poor like something from another planet. The Government now has a strategy for minimum pay but not for maximum pay or even for pay in between — unless you happen to work in the public sector where an unacceptably severe incomes policy is in operation. Minimum wages must not be allowed to join public sector earnings as the orphan of pay policy. Fairness must be all embracing.

Off-pitch politics

Iran vs US is more than a game

THE GREAT SATAN is beginning to become just a little bit cuddly. Wednesday's speech by the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, inviting Iran to "bridge the gap" with the US has been billed by her aides as a major policy initiative. She acknowledged Iran's "critical role" in Asia and described the election as president of Mohammad Khatami nine months ago as "remarkable". She even offered an indirect apology for US cold war policies in the past: this may be seen as reciprocating a similar gesture by Mr Khatami when he regretted the "hurt" inflicted when the US hostages were seized after the revolution.

All of this is eminently sensible, particularly after several months of mixed signals from Washington in response to the new president's election, which can only have given encouragement to his enemies in Tehran. It is true that if the US opens its arms too wide, this could provoke a negative reaction. In all such cases where relations are being rebuilt from scratch, it is important to proceed with care. Ms Albright acknowledges that two decades of mistrust cannot be erased overnight, and that the gap remains wide. But the proposal to develop a "roadmap" towards normalisation strikes the right note: yesterday's initial negative reaction from the Iranian foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi should not be taken too seriously. Both sides will now begin a cautious process of sounding out.

The strategic implications of this move are huge in more than one geopolitical direction. An improvement in Tehran's relations with the US would impact positively elsewhere in the Middle East, helping to disarm one of Israel's most potent concerns. If the UN is coming closer to lifting sanctions on Iraq as the process of weapons inspection nears completion, then there is all the more reason to bring its Iranian neighbour out of the diplomatic cold. Iran's involvement in the tangled oil politics of central Asia is another reason for establishing a more consultative mood with Tehran.

The timing of Ms Albright's initiative after much hesitation may simply indicate that a slow policy appraisal has at last reached maturity. But can it be entirely coincidence that it comes just before Iran plays the US in the World Cup?

Viagra's value

But will it bankrupt the NHS?

MINISTERS are about to make Viagra, the new drug which tackles impotency, available on prescription. Is this right when all kinds of drugs and medical procedures are rationed already? It was drugs which produced the first big row in the national health service when prescription charges were debated within its first year and introduced by its third. Is the NHS, just two weeks away from its 50th birthday, about to be made bankrupt by the Viagra decision? Some commentators have been predicting just such a dire outcome. Impotency increases by 1 per cent a year over the age of 20, with 40 per cent of men suffering from the condition by the age of 60. An estimated 3 million men are suffering from impotency in Britain. The new drug will cost the NHS £120 for a packet of 30. Clearly the final bill is going to be steep but the cost is being exaggerated.

Compared with some pharmaceutical breakthroughs, Viagra is extremely cheap. New drugs to tackle Aids and multiple sclerosis have run into five figures per patient per year. New treatments for patients with coronary artery disease and raised serum cholesterol concentrations have cost six figures per patient per year. Viagra, in comparison, looks cheaper than chicken feed, although its client group is much bigger. The larger the number of eligible patients, the more nervous ministers become about making a drug available. But anti-impotency drugs are already available on the NHS. Viagra is not just cheaper but much more convenient to use. The current options require either an injection in the penis or the insertion of a pellet. There are other ways the cost will be reduced for the NHS. If patients are restricted to one month's supply, which is the current practice in many hospitals, the better-off will be paying £5.80 a month even if the old and poor are receiving free prescriptions. Viagra passes three crucial tests: it is cheaper than current products, more easily administered, and likely to cause fewer complications.

Ministers are wary of a rising drugs bill, but not all drugs push up total costs. The new aids drugs have reduced the need for hospital beds. GPs do overprescribe, but even with Viagra many men will still be reluctant to turn up for a prescription.

Letters to the Editor

Needle over foreign names

GEORGE Martin has the wrong end of the stick when he suggests that ex-addict musicians speaking out will help to deglamorise drug-taking (Fashion defends 'junkie' image, June 17). In most cases the reverse is true: the most vocal examples like Eric Clapton, Pete Townshend, Van Morrison and David Bowie, who haven't made a decent record between them in years, only serve to reinforce the notion that good music requires good drugs.
Catherine Lewis.
Bristol.

YOUR recent reports have utilised the French spelling Marseille despite there being a long-established English usage, viz, Marseilles. I look forward to despatches from Roma, Venezia, Lisboa, Munchen, Genève, Milano, Wien, Napoli, Kobenhavn, Firenze, Köln, Antwerpen, Torino, Praha and divers places on the other side of the Channel — sorry, Manche.
David Townsend.
Brentwood, Essex.

YOU reported "Britain is the smallest of the Big Five" (Trident warheads to be cut by half, June 18). But when it comes to moral leadership, size is not important.
Cllr Paul Ingram (Green).
Oxford.

TRAVELLING on public transport is environmentally responsible and should be encouraged (Letters, June 18). But to an airport?
Mark Lewney.
Cardiff.

DAVID Smith (Letters, June 17) claims the Americans won the war. I seem to remember reports of some skirmishes in Russia in the early forties.
Dr Brendan Judge.
Torquay.

The defects of eugenics

AS the parents of a now thriving and happy boy born well below the 1.5kg cut-off line advocated by Michael Berwyn-Jones (Born losers, June 17) we wish to reply on his behalf. The article misses the point about natural selection the same way as the Nazis did. Human beings are curious and restless, and it is the challenge of overcoming the seemingly impossible that has changed humankind from a naked ape into a potential interplanetary voyager — and why we can communicate by e-mailing the Guardian rather than depositing pheromones on a lamp post.
Those who represent the frailty of the human condition most acutely, most acutely engage us with what it is to be human, and inspire all those who seek to transcend that frailty by extending the power of the human intellect.
James and Claire Little.
Newark, Notts.

MICHAEL Berwyn-Jones offers a bleak masculine concept of the brave new world, uncluttered by feeling and emotion. Undeniably some efforts to save very small babies are in the interest of neither the parent nor the child and, at up to £100,000 a baby, are a significant drain on NHS resources. But the debate needs to be set within the social context. Integral to this is the mental well-being of parents, often desperate to bear offspring.
Rhiannon Baker.
Wadhurst, E Sussex.

AS there are few of us who are blessed with a set of 100 per cent healthy genes, I take great exception to being labelled "feeble and immoral" for not being sterilised, after my "selfish" act of producing a child who was hospitalised throughout her short life at great expense.
Jane Dadswell.
Romford, Essex.

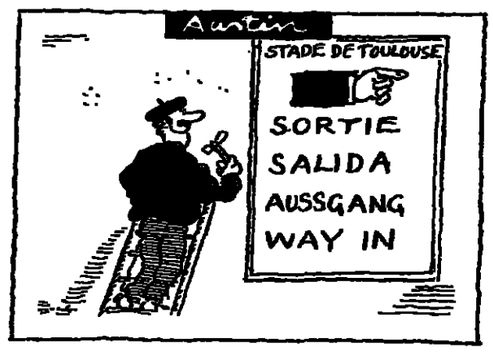
MY wife is a beneficiary of fertility treatment. Her pregnancy brought about by IVF, her condition caused by an adolescent chlamydial infection. "Defective stock" in Mr Berwyn-Jones's words.
But chlamydia is not a hereditary condition and neither are most of the causes of infertility. Nor are the 5,000 or so children born so far by IVF treatment a serious contributory factor to population explosion. And how does he countenance his belief that "technical brilliance is taking the evasion of natural selection to ridiculous extremes", with his plea for more voluntary sterilisation and genetic intervention? Where's the natural selection in that?.
Martyn Robinson.
London.

I DO not know any better than anyone else what society's view of infertility, dealing with premature babies, or indeed dealing with pre-birth diagnosed abnormalities should be, but I do know how much it costs both in time and resources. No government is going to throw much of its voters' money at the problem unless its voters insist. That "£100,000 per baby" quoted by Berwyn-Jones is NHS money. What do the voters otherwise want to do with it?
Roger Callender.
(Obstetrician),
Wolverhampton.

WHY not also consider the benefit of castrating young men, and allowing the elderly, the mentally ill and the disabled (who cost us all so much) to die off quietly? Then we could deal with the rest our taxes support, like criminals and gypsies.
Ruth Richardson.
London.

BBC tiptoes to privatisation

CHRIS Smith has now created the conditions for the privatisation of large parts of the BBC (Smith calls on BBC, June 17) by authorising the creation of the BBC's new commercial arm, BBC Resources Ltd. BBC executives deny this. Mr Smith is stern and sends out a comforting signal. There will be "no privatisation of the new subsidiary unless my further approval has been sought and obtained". Yet in raising the point, Mr Smith admits the possibility. This idea was put forward by the Conservative's favourite think-tank of the 1980s, the Adam Smith Institute. Mrs Thatcher convened a public inquiry, the Peacock Committee, and after much public debate, this idea was shelved, until revived in the early 1990s by that protégé of the Thatcher era, John Birt. Devolving the BBC into self-financing units was seen by the Labour Party, and all those concerned for the health of broadcasting, as a step towards privatisation; for it is impossible to simultaneously commercialise the BBC and promote public service broadcasting.
In place of a public inquiry into the future of the BBC, Mr Smith is content to offer us policy created by rightwing pressure groups, BBC executives and representatives from the media conglomerates.
Tom O'Malley.
Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom,
London.



Racists? Do they mean us?

GARY Younge must be mistaken in his experiences of racism in Europe (Borders of hate, June 17). I have been attending conferences on racism for years and have been told quite firmly by academics and officials in each country that racism could not possibly exist there. For instance:
● There is no racism towards migrants in Spain because it has been a country of emigration and understands the problems of immigrants.
● Racism is not a normal part of Italian culture because Italian fascism, unlike German fascism, was never anti-Semitic, and Italy had the largest communist party in Europe, reflecting a culture of international brotherhood.
● Germany had been the most institutionally racist state in Europe under the Nazis and, therefore, racism was removed when the Nazi state was abolished.
● Racism is absent from French culture because the 1789 revolution institutionalised "liberty, equality and fraternity" into French society.
● Sweden has never been a colonial power ruling over non-white peoples.
● The Dutch operated a more benevolent form of colonialism, illustrated by a high rate of intermarriage between Dutch and ex-colonial peoples.
● Portugal was the first country to open up new lands with its voyages of discovery to Africa and India, thus exposing the Portuguese people to non-Europeans earlier than other countries.
If Guardian readers have examples to cover the missing EU countries, then we can really be sure that the EU is free of racism.
Dr John Wrench.
Centre for Migration and Ethnic Studies, Denmark.

GARY Younge reminded us of our struggles against racism — in England. In the eighties my daughter was the only one on her school trip to France to have her bags searched — she is mixed-race, the others were white. In Wetherby, in Yorkshire, she was asked by a policeman if she had absconded from a local secure home while standing on the pavement with a group of fellow sixth-formers. She asked the policeman why he was only putting questions to her. When we complained, a police inspector pointed out that the policeman was an ardent church-goer.
C Pugh.
Birmingham.

Supporters split over Blair's off-the-ball tackle on thugs

I'M ALARMED at reports that Tony Blair is suggesting that convicted hooligans be dismissed on return to the UK (Sack hooligans, Blair tells employers, June 18). There has been a knee-jerk reaction to the situation and this government has given carte blanche to the French authorities to victimise the majority of English football supporters.
The innocent will find themselves being dragged through the courts alongside those deserving our opprobium: the real thugs. The returning fans will find the witchhunts continue and their lives shattered if our Prime Minister continues to pander to the Mail-reading moral majority.
Mark Hart.
Manchester.

RARELY do I feel sufficiently motivated to write to the letters page but I feel I must support the Prime Minister's view. Moreover, I do not agree that such dismissals would be legally problematic. If these people are serving prison sentences then they will not be available for work; this will be an unauthorised absence, and they could be deemed to have frustrated their contracts.
As well as bringing their country into disrepute, they are surely also guilty of the same in respect of their employer.
David Long.
Surbiton,
Surrey.

I'M looking forward to a similar edict requesting that clubs sack players who abuse their partners or direct racist comments at their opponents.
David McArdle.
London.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters.

Oxfam
Sudan
Appeal

This is your chance to help Oxfam to prevent widespread famine in Sudan.
Right now, people are running out of food because of war and drought. Your gift will help Oxfam to stop people dying of starvation.
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Sudan Appeal Line ✆ 01865 313131
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Gloria in excelsis

Bel Littlejohn



Continuing our serialisation of Diana: Princess of Megastar by Bel Littlejohn, published by Fourth Estate

SO WHO was this royal bloke — this man in trousers, this product of an outdated upper class, this twitchy-faced defender of the sexual and hierarchical status quo — this nerd whom Diana sat alongside in the royal carriage that cold, drizzly November afternoon as the reluctant horses, neighing and whinnying as if to say "Leave him, love", pulled the two of them back along the King's Road after their wedding in St Paul's Abbey?

Charles was the product of a supremely dysfunctional family. One of his forebears — Henry — had divorced two of his wives and beheaded two more. Another — Elizabeth I — had placed those she disagreed with on piles of logs, bolstered them up with Zip firelighters embossed with the royal logo and set fire to them. And yet another — Alfred — had, in a typically male frenzy of callous arson, burnt a senior citizen's cakes.

Charles's father, Philip, was a "man's man", frightening, sporty, given to armwrestling his wife before sitting down to a bedroom barbecue. Chastity was a stranger to him — but he knew Melanie, Fidelity and Trixie all too well. A simple browse through the court circular of the period reveals the range and variety of the married women Philip "entertained" at his central London love-nest, Buckingham Castle: in just one week in 1970, his so-called "guests" included Mrs Brezhnev, Margaret Trudeau, Mary Wilson, Princess Grace of Monaco and Mrs Richard Nixon. Small wonder that his eldest son, socialised into this macho environment of misogyny, mayhem, malevolence, microbiology and (*copy-editor insert something else beginning with m*) was set to become the living embodiment of toffee-nosed sexism.

Charles, according to authoritative royal biographer, Kitty Kelley, was educated at Eton Academy, where he was forced to wear the traditional school uniform, designed for Queen Victoria, of long crinoline dress, high-heeled shoes and black silk brassiere. Here, reveals Kelley, Charles first learnt to shoot baby seals at close range and, every morning before breakfast, to prove his manhood by placing his right arm inside the stomach of a dead sheep and supping on its entrails.

AT Cambridge, he refused to follow the pursuits of the ordinary student. Not for Prince Snooty the "Make Love Not War" T-shirt, the sit-in, the Che Guevara poster, the puking in the gutter after eight pints of Wadworth's Triple X, the mind-blowing spliff in the shared sleeping-bag while Pink Floyd's latest concept album blasted from the speakers: no, His Royal Snootiness preferred to indulge in the élite pastimes of his class, dressing up to murder household pets in the name of sport.

And what, then, of Diana? According to Kitty Kelley, author of authoritative biographies like Bob Hope: Comedian and Serial Killer and The Queen Mother: Slut, the Prince's advisers chose her from a catalogue, and the Prince spoke to her only once before their marriage, turning to her at dinner one night and asking her to pass him the mashed potato. According to Bert Bung, for many years one of the most expert royal-watchers on the Daily Star, two years after their marriage the Prince could not even remember her name, referring to her in official speeches as "Princess Deirdre" or even "Princess Darren".

It was only after five long years of marriage that Charles first noticed the Princess of Wales was a woman. One evening, she wore an off-the-shoulder crinoline number, a ravishing dress that announced that here was no shrinking violet but a full-bosomed, broad-shouldered, wholly-sexualised woman in the manner of Marilyn Monroe. Looking at herself in the mirror, Diana almost certainly thought, in her own words, "Hey! This is me! I am woman! I am empowered by my burgeoning sexuality to challenge my containment in a patriarchal structure dominated by the class-based shibboleths of a past age. And yes, in the words of the legendary Gloria Gaynor — *I will survive.*"

Though I never "knew" Diana in any tediously literal sense of the word, I did indeed know her in the far deeper sense of never having met her at all. Her in all her Herness, her HRHness, her HGVness, her HBpencilness. Diana, the working-class girl who took on the British aristocracy. Diana, the nursery-school teacher who rose to become the Oxford Professor of Modern Philosophy. No, Diana, we writers shall never, ever forget you, not for as long as sales permit.



Brush with the future . . . Kestelman's Fisherman Mending Nets, painted in 1955 during his transition from representational to abstract work

Morris Kestelman

Painting with purpose

MORRIS Kestelman, who has died aged 92, was one of several British painters, not exactly a group, who went over from representation to abstraction in the early 1950s. That this did not cause anything like the hullabaloo that the "defection" of, say, Victor Pasmore or Rodrigo Moynihan caused was due partly to Kestelman being considerably less well-known than either of them, but also — characteristic of him personally — because he did it not with a flourish, not even perhaps as the result of a decision consciously taken.

Virtually everything in Kestelman's life, professional and personal, happened with the same appearance of inevitability — as though he just left things to develop organically of their own accord. Almost certainly, this was far from the case: he had an underlying steely determination in everything that affected his art — though not necessarily in a professional sense. He had little to do with artistic politics, and cared little about knowing the right people, being shown in the right places, or acquiring the right patrons. But when something seemed right to him artistically, then he could not be budged.

This means that his work, whether representational or abstract, has an inescapable sense of inner conviction: that is the way he sees it, that is the way it is. It is consequently very difficult in his mature work to pin down influences or attach him to schools. Typically, the only society that he joined and stayed with was the London Group — and one could hardly ask for a less defining, less constraining body.

He had strong personal convictions — working on behalf of Jewish and generally liberal causes, such as the 1943 London exhibition For Liberty, in which he took a main part along with Oscar Kokoschka, Carel Weight and John Tunnard. But most of his life was dedicated to art, either making or teaching it.

Kestelman was born in London, the second of four children of recent Jewish emigrés from eastern Europe. He seems to have been drawing and painting almost before he could read or write, and there was never much doubt that he would have to become a professional artist. When he was



Kestelman . . . the way it is

17, he went to the Central School of Art, where he studied under Bernard Meninsky, who became a major inspiration as well as a personal friend.

There is often something slightly reminiscent of Meninsky about his early work, notably a series of painting of peasants in France and Spain going about their everyday tasks in rather dreamlike landscapes, which recall Meninsky's later so-called "Miltonic" pastorals.

In 1931, much against Meninsky's will, Kestelman took himself off to complete three months' painting at Cagnes-sur-Mer, on the French Riviera, where to begin with he occupied Soutine's old studio. Meninsky mistrusted the Mediterranean blandishments of Cagnes, but Kestelman adapted in much the same way that Kandinsky had made the transition in the 1900s, first painting his usual subjects (in Kestelman's case mostly landscapes) with more and more freedom, then gradually letting the representational element drain away until all that was left was the expressive colours and the organic-looking but unrecognisable shapes.

After his retirement as Head of Painting at Central in 1971 Kestelman continued to paint with renewed energy and enthusiasm. He remained extraordinarily youthful — at his 90th birthday party it was universally remarked that he could well pass for 30 years younger — and he was painting and exhibiting right to the last. One of his finest abstracts, of plant-like forms in greens and browns, is in the current Royal Academy summer exhibition.

Kestelman married in 1936. His wife died last year and he is survived by their only child, the actress Sara Kestelman.

John Russell Taylor

Morris Kestelman, painter, born October 5, 1905; died June 15, 1998

Professor Gerald 'Ged' Adams

A fighter in the cancer wars

PROFESSOR Gerald "Ged" Adams, chairman of the Gray Laboratory Cancer Research Trust and former director of the Medical Research Council Radiobiology Unit, has died aged 68. His approach to science was epitomised in his assertion that "God created science, but man created physics, chemistry and biology". His vigour and enthusiasm, particularly for collaborative projects between disciplines, generated an international reputation in radiation science and cancer research.

Educated at Manchester Grammar School, Adams studied chemistry (after military service) at what is now the University of Salford, and radiation chemistry at the University of Manchester. Two overseas post-doctoral appointments in radiation chemistry research followed. In 1962, the late L H Gray was looking for a radiation chemist to advance knowledge about the short-lived free radicals produced when aqueous solutions (or cancer cells) are irradiated, using the then new technique of pulse radiolysis. Adams was invited to join Gray's unit in radiobiology at Mount Vernon Hospital, Middlesex, and soon began to apply his radiation-chemical knowledge to problems of biological interest.

Arguably his most well-known contribution to radiation science and cancer treatment was in the development of drugs as hypoxic cell radiosensitisers. Gray, with O C A Scott, had identified low intra-cellular oxygen levels as a potential cause of failure of radiotherapy treatment. Adams sought to identify drugs that might restore the radiosensitivity of hypoxic tumour cells by intercepting the free radicals produced during radiotherapy.

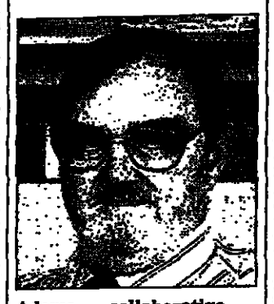
By 1971 his team had managed to identify the most suitable type of compound for clinical evaluation in radiotherapy, and in 1974 the first major clinical trial of a radiosensitising drug took place. It is a testimony to Adams's vigour that it was to be only a few months between his team characterising the drug's radio-sensitising properties in chemical solutions and cells in dishes and its first trial in patients.

Neurotoxidity of this and successor drugs limited human tolerance and hence clinical effectiveness. However, meta-analysis of numerous clinical trials of Adams's prototype and analogues proved not only the validity of the concept, but also underlined the link between oxygen "starvation" and the success of radiotherapy treatment put forward by Gray and Scott.

In 1977 Adams was appointed professor of physics as applied to medicine of the University of London at the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) in Sutton. There, he was to expand his team and take a new bio-reductive drug, selectively toxic to hypoxic tumour cells, towards clinical trial. While this, too, proved eventually unsuitable, the work stimulated a vigorous new field of cancer research.

Broadening his interests to cancer chemotherapy had not diminished Adams's command of the principles of radio-biology. In 1982, he was appointed director of the Medical Research Council's radiobiology unit at Harwell, where he remained until retirement in 1995.

Retirement, however,



Adams . . . collaborative

hardly described Ged's lifestyle after his period as MRC director. He was invited by the Cancer Research Campaign (CRC) to become editor-in-chief of the British Journal of Cancer. He also became the first chairman of the Gray Laboratory Cancer Research Trust, set up in 1955 to oversee the transfer to an independent unit of the Mount Vernon research institute.

The laboratory had been through a period of change, but Ged was not content to see his former institute simply consolidate its research. He helped assemble a new board of trustees, began a major fund-raising appeal in conjunction with the CRC, set up a building programme to house new research initiatives, and moved the magnetic resonance facility from Harwell to the Gray Laboratory, and recruited several young scientists to work on new areas of research. This thriving environment in turn helped stimulate the existing research programmes to new successes. In recognition of his pivotal contribution, the new building is to be named the Ged Adams Building.

Such activity in retirement is easily understood when one views Ged's earlier extramural roles. These included serving as chairman of the Association for Radiation Research (UK) and as president of the International Association for Radiation Research. He was also elected president of the Radiation Research Society in the United States. He served as chairman of the British Association for Cancer Research, as president of the British Institute of Radiology, on the Board of the European Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology, and, as president of the Eighth International Congress of Radiation Research. Numerous honours came his way.

Ged was not elitist, and mixed as easily with young scientists as with the elder statesmen of radiation research. He was as interested in immediate benefits in patient treatment as in longer-term and more basic research. One of his most recent projects was to raise funds for the installation of a cyclotron at the Gray Laboratory, to provide isotopes for the scanner centre at Mount Vernon and thus help improve diagnostic imaging of patients' tumours — and learn more about tumour physiology.

Those who seek to follow in Ged's footsteps will not match his impact on research across a wide spectrum of science if they cannot manage, as he did, to "escape from the confinement ... of the cult of specialisation for learning more and more about less and less." Adams, too, demonstrated the power of multi-disciplinary research, but it will be a hard act to follow; his presence will be sorely missed in many international forums.

He leaves a widow, Margaret, and three sons, from whom he drew much support.

Peter Wardman

Gerald Edward Adams, scientist, born March 8, 1930; died June 6, 1998

Keith Newton

Back to the front

FULL-BACKS have long been the unsung heroes of football; they do not fill glamorous positions. But Keith Newton, who has died of cancer aged 56, proved his durability by playing more than 550 league matches for his three main clubs. His star quality was underlined by his success. At Blackburn, he developed into the best right-back in the country; at Everton, he was part of a title-winning team; at Burnley, he helped his club climb back into the First Division.

His ability also took him to international heights and he made 27 appearances for England between the World Cup triumph of 1966 and the finals in Mexico four years later.

Tall and strong, Newton had all the qualities of a top-class defender. But he also possessed the ability to counter-attack at speed, acting as a winger when they were out of fashion, and, even though his international career ended after the 1970 World Cup, he still had eight years of league football left in him — six of them with Burnley.

Born in Manchester, Newton joined Blackburn Rovers in April, 1958 as a non-contract player. Six months later, he signed as a professional. In his younger days he played inside-forward, wing-half and, in the Rovers team which claimed the FA Youth Cup in 1959, centre-half. But it was as a full-back that he won England under-21 recognition and was unlucky to miss selection for the 1966 World Cup squad.

Although Rovers dropped into the Second Division that year, Newton's qualities ensured he became a regular international choice. But he was unsettled and eventually moved to Everton in December 1969 for £80,000.

THAT move perhaps ensured he went to Mexico in 1970, where in a 3-2 quarter-final defeat England's defence of the trophy ended. Newton had set up goals for Alan Mullery and Martin Peters and England were in a seemingly unbeatable position until Gerd Muller, Franz Beckenbauer and company scored three times to put them out of the competition.

Newton was never to play for his country again. Nevertheless, the 1969-70 domestic season had ended with him boasting a championship medal as part of an outstanding Everton team. His career with the club involved almost 50 league appearances, with one goal.

In June, 1972, Newton stepped back down to Division Two by joining Burnley on a free transfer, but it wasn't long before he was in the top flight again. Excelling at full-back, he was ever-present as Burnley won the Second Division championship and stayed up until 1976. Always a popular and effective player, he made 252 appearances for the club in all competitions, scoring seven goals.

In 1978, Newton dropped out of full-time football and had a brief spell as manager of non-league Morecambe and Clitheroe. He later worked in the motor trade in Blackburn. He leaves a wife, Barbara, and a son.

Peter White

Keith Robert Newton, footballer, born June 23, 1941; died June 16, 1998

Birthdays

Aung San Suu Kyi, Burmese political leader, Nobel laureate, 53; **Thelma Barlow**, actress, 64; **Jeremy Bates**, tennis player, 36; **John Bignell**, photographer, 91; **Dr Neil Chalmers**, director, Natural History Museum, 56; **Shirley Dixon**, actress, 65; **Charlie Drake**, comedian, 73; **Ena Evans**, educationalist, 60; **Rt Rev John Hind**, Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe, 53; **Pauline Kael**, writer and film critic, 79; **Bryan Kneale**, sculptor, 68; **Dame Unity Lister**, campaigner for women, 85; **Mike O'Brien**, MP, minister for immigration, 44; **Salman Rushdie**, novelist, 51; **Andrew Summers**, chief executive, Design Council, 52; **Dr Joan Thirsk**, historian, 76; **Kathleen Turner**, actress, 44.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

JEREMY ROBERTS QC: On July 31, 1997, we published a review of the *Rough Justice* programme broadcast by BBC2. The review repeated a statement made in the programme, that during the Carl Bridgewater appeal, Mr Roberts attempted to stifle a valid criticism of Mr John Gormon QC, who was Pat Molloy's original leading counsel at the trial in 1979, by threatening to retaliate by introducing in evidence Molloy's alleged confession to a prison education officer. The BBC have apologised to Mr Roberts in a statement made in open court accepting that the allegation was wholly untrue and should not have been made and have paid substantial damages to a charity of his choice. We apologise to Mr Roberts for repeating the allegation.

IN AN American Notebook, page 18, June 15, we referred to the B-17 Flying Fortress and the B-24 Liberator as "two of Boeing's most illustrious war planes". The B-24 was in fact designed and built by the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation.

BERRY POMEROY, one of the seats of the Duke of Somerset, is in Devon, not Somerset. We located wrongly in an article headed, Last of the line, page 4, G2, June 16.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Please quote date and page number. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor by telephoning 0171 239 9589 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Surface mail to Readers' Editor, The Guardian, 119, Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER. Fax: 0171 239 9897. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

A Country Diary

CO LONDONDERRY: The larks sang overhead and the dog roses bloomed in damask pink and yellow forms on the dunes behind the foreshore at Castlerock, which provide the acreage of one of the four coastal golf courses over which the Black Bush Causeway Coast Amateur Gold Tournament was played. With one rest day, when we got wet in a cool wind coming in off the Irish Sea, we went through the four-course rotation without getting rained on. When the wind is in the west, the showers can come in over 3,000 miles of open Atlantic and appear over the bulk of Inishowen to soak you before you have time to get the rain gear out of the bag. Ballycastle, the most easterly of the links, we visited on a day of sparkling sunshine and the most extended views northwards to Islay and Jura were the clearest I have ever seen from this point on the coast. In the foreground, the long shape of Rathlin Island lay before us and the windmill electricity generators, the proof of the success of the long campaign the islanders ran for a mains electricity supply, could be spotted just below the peak of the ridge. At Portstewart, the Bann is close to entering the sea and the swirling peaty waters made a dark river surface despite a blue sky above. On the last afternoon, just to make a change from golf, I took a colleague to visit the Giant's Causeway and the still water offshore and the westering sun made a perfect setting for this set piece example of earth science.

COLIN LUCKHURST

Death Notices

WORRELL. Raymond of St. Vincent's Road, Grantham, passed away peacefully at home on 13th June, 1998, aged 71 years. Loving husband of Sheila and a devoted father, father-in-law and grandad. Will be sadly missed.

Births

BEALE. Emily Louise, was born in San Francisco on 4th June, 1998, weighing 9lb 4oz. Much love and many congratulations from both families to her parents, Andy and Kate (née McQuillin). Emily is the first grandchild of Brian and Jane McQuillin, of Cumbria, and David and Pauline Searles of Surrey.

Anniversaries

MALLARD. HATFIELD, 21st June 1958 at St. Michaels Church, Wilmington, Kent.

■To place your announcement telephone 0171 713 4567 or fax 0171 713 4707 between 9am and 5pm Mon-Fri

Malcolm Gluck's *Not* The World Cup Case



Only £59.95 inc p&p delivered to your door



There is nothing new in valiant Britons fighting on the fields of France, but for those sporting pacifists who, like me, find the whole thing rather overwhelming help is at hand: the Guardian's Not The World Cup Case of Wine. Here are twelve bottles, not quite representative of all the nations competing (Brazil, to name but one absentee, produces dribblers but very few gluggers), but each is highly drinkable and good value. So pour; quaff; sit back. It is not necessary to think of England or Scotland.

A 12-bottle mixed case of wine comprising:

RIOJA CRIANZA JESUS PUELLES 1995 (SPAIN)
Lovely elegance, freshness and youth. Vivacious yet controlled. (16 points)

NORTE CHICO CABERNET SAUVIGNON MERLOT 1997 (CHILE)
Quite big and chunky with good tannins and a sweet juicy finish. (14.5 points)

PETEROA CHARDONNAY 1996 (CHILE)
Lots of flavour – an excellent balance of elements. (15 points) 2 bottles

BERKANE DOMAINE CHAUDSOLEIL (MOROCCO)
Great two-pronged attack of depth and surface vigour. (15.5 points)

LIUBIMETZ SAKAR MOUNTAIN CABERNET 1992 (BULGARIA)
Juicy, warm and dry – the essence of what approachable Cabernet is about. (15.5 points)

FIOR DI SELVA BARRIQUE DOCG 1994 (ITALY)
Hugely classy organic red. It is rich, tobacco-edged, expensive, luxurious and very refined. (16.5 points)

LES BUGADELLES COTES DU LUBERON ROUGE 1997 (FRANCE)
Gentle, earthy fruit which is never pushy or too restrained, but simply unpretentiously quaffable. (15.5 points)

VAUCLUSE ROUGE 1997 (FRANCE)
Soft ripe fruit with a hint of earth fights it out with the balancing acidity for control of the taste buds – great little glug. (15 points) 2 bottles

COTES DU RHONE BLANC LES CHAIS DE LA BARRADE 1997 (FRANCE)
Uniquely flavoured fresh and French. Not remotely modern but delicious. (15.5 points) 2 bottles

Wine Supplied by The Guardian Wine Shop, Vinoremos, 281 Upper Town Street, Leeds LS13 3JT. Tel: 0870 73 73 710. Fax: 0113 257 6906.

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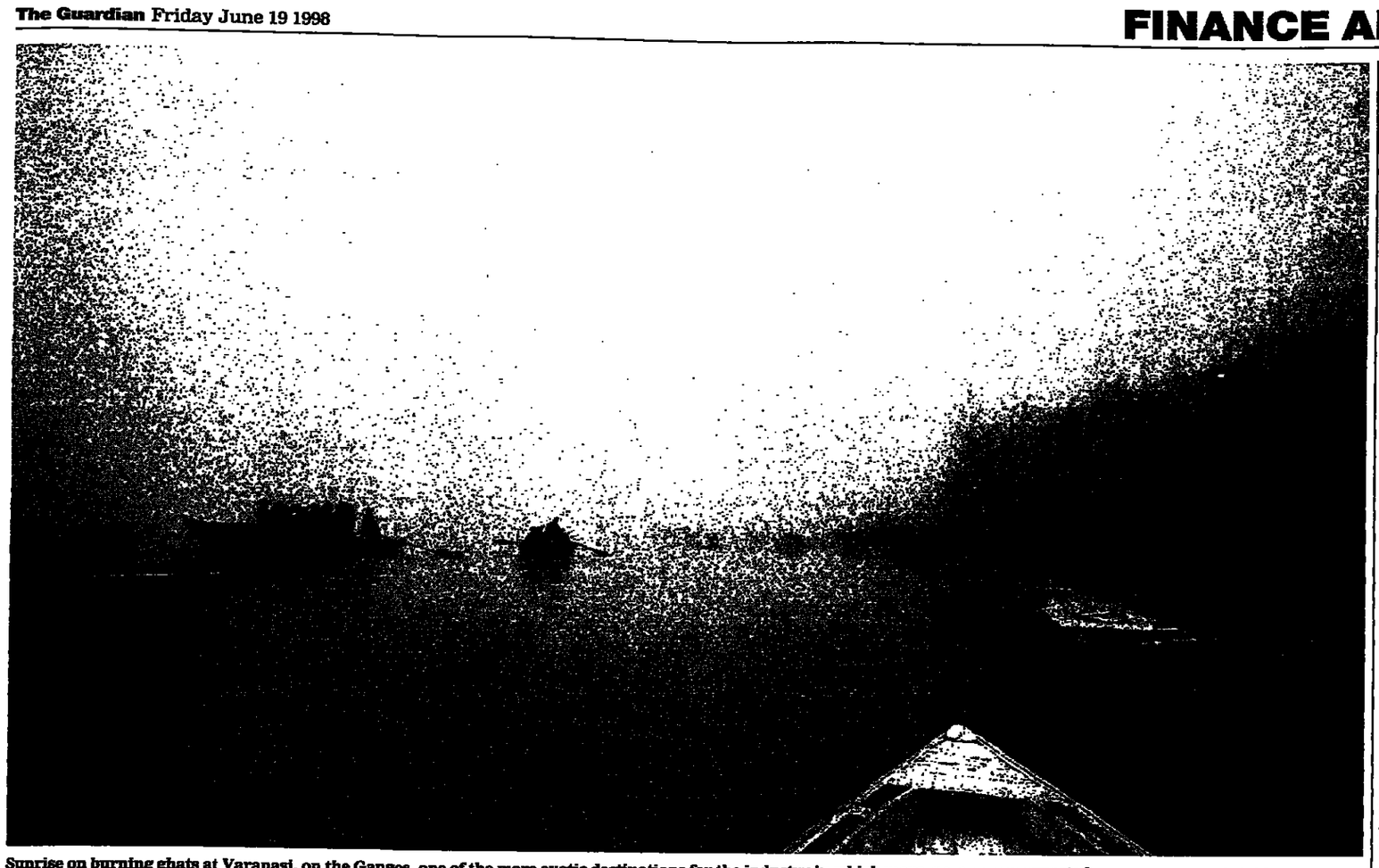
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A full and non-refundable deposit is required on receipt of order. Delivery is subject to availability and we reserve the right to substitute wines of equal or greater value. Delivery will be arranged by Interlink Express Parcels and will normally within 7 days, but sometimes may take up to allow 28 days. Credit card payments will be processed by The Guardian Wine Shop. Interlink Express Parcels will collect on behalf of The Guardian Wine Shop. Delivery charges are £5 per case. Please tick if you do not wish to receive, by post, many items in which you may be interested. Please tick if you do not wish to receive, by post, any further offers from companies selected by The Guardian Wine Shop.

هكذا من الاصل



Sunrise on burning ghats at Varanasi, on the Ganges, one of the more exotic destinations for the industry in which more mergers are expected PHOTOGRAPH: TONY MAY

First Choice beats rivals to Unijet

Tony May

CONSOLIDATION of the £37 billion a year package holiday industry moved a stage further yesterday with the announcement of two deals totalling £180 million.

The First Choice holiday group beat off its rivals to buy out the Unijet group, number five in the industry, and Hayes & Jarvis, the upmarket package holiday group, for a total of £134 million.

Thomas Cook paid an undisclosed sum, estimated by analysts to be £65 million, for Flying Colours, which runs Club 18-30 and Sunset Holidays.

The deals are said to have pushed First Choice up to number two in the industry, with a 15.4 per cent market share, just ahead of Airtours with 15 per cent.

The German-owned Thomas Cook is at number four, but so fast was the pace of change that it had to scrap an announcement it had prepared in the morning claiming the number three slot.

Ian Clubb, chairman of First Choice, said bidding for the target companies was protracted over many weeks and all the industry's major participants like Thomson and Airtours were involved. Although they emerged as the winners, neither First Choice nor Thomas Cook admitted they were paying too much.

Mr Clubb believes there may be more mergers to come. The remaining independents Cosmos, with 3 per cent of the market, and Inspirations, holding 1 per cent, are still in play.

First Choice and Thomas Cook said that competition would remain fierce and that consumers would benefit, but the real winners were the vendors. Chris Parker, founder of Unijet, will pocket about £105 million from the deal and Thomas and Melba Correia, who founded Hayes & Jarvis 20 years ago, will take £24 million to the Caribbean where they run hotels.

Unijet is 34 per cent-owned by KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, which will receive £37 million in cash, and Flying Colours was owned by venture capitalists headed by NatWest Equity Partners.

First Choice becomes the biggest operator in the rapidly expanding and more profitable long-haul business.

"Together these strategic acquisitions offer a unique opportunity for First Choice to become the leading player in the fast growing high-value long-haul sector," said Mr Clubb. The deals bring his group new destinations in Africa, the Far East and the Caribbean.

He expects to show savings of about £5 million a year, partly by incorporating Unijet's airfleet with his own. He warned that some jobs would go, but only at the airline.

Separately, the company said its loss in the six months to April 30 had fallen 42 per cent to £13.7 million as the performance of its UK and Canadian businesses improved. First Choice, which is in the second year of a cost-cutting reorganisation, makes most of its profit in the second half of the year, like other tour operators. It aims to increase its profit margin to the industry-average of 4 per cent of sales by 1999.

The package travel industry is growing at 8.5 per cent a year. The 17.9 million passengers carried last year earned revenue of £7.5 billion for the air-inclusive part of the industry, an increase of 17.2 per cent on 1996. The average holiday price was up 3.4 per cent to £394.

The big players

Thomson

BRITAIN'S largest travel operator with 21 per cent of the market.

Its Britannia Airways is the UK's second biggest airline after BA. It owns the Lunn Poly tour agency chain as well as Holiday Cottages, the biggest renter of holiday cottages in the Britain.

Its brands include Ausbound, Austravel, Budget Travel, Portland Direct and Skytours.

Last year it sold 3.7 million holidays and flew nearly 18 million people to make a profit of £112.4 million on turnover of £1.7 billion.

First Choice

NOW claims a 15.4 per cent market share. Profit last year was £15.4 million on turnover of £1 billion while Unijet made £10.2 million profit on turnover of £308.6 million.

Hayes & Jarvis had a turnover of £51.7 million in 1997 and an adjusted profit before taxation of £2.7 million, stated after adding back non-recurring directors' emoluments and bonuses of £700,000.

First Choice will benefit from Unijet's strength in holidays to Florida and the Caribbean and gain six aircraft from its Leisure International subsidiary. Unijet also has a car hire division, Suncars, which operates in its main holiday destinations.

Airtours

WAS the industry number two with 15 per cent of the market.

It owns Airtours International Airways and the Going Places travel chain.

Had it succeeded in buying Unijet it would have had a market share of 20 per cent, but instead may have slipped to number three.

Its brands include Aspro Holidays, Eurosites and Tradewinds and last year it carried 5 million passengers and sold 2.9 million holidays. It made a profit of £120 million on turnover of £2.1 billion.

Thomas Cook

ONCE owned by the British Government, the privatised tour group is now in the hands of Westdeutsche Landesbank. The company says its purchase of Flying Colours could give Sunworld 16 per cent of its market. But it would remain fourth in terms of holidays sold.

It expects to carry more than 1.5 million people this summer on its combined fleet of 14 aircraft. Flying Colours has 5 per cent of the market and a total staff of 1,400. It will be merged with Sunworld, established in 1991 and purchased by Thomas Cook in 1996. It has an 11 per cent share of the UK market and employs 1,600 staff.

Remy needs ally after £64.2m loss

Lisa Buckingham
City Editor

REMY Cointreau, the world's sixth biggest drinks group, may be forced into an alliance with an industry saviour after announcing larger than expected losses yesterday.

The group, whose brands include Remy Martin cognac, Cointreau and the Piper Heidsieck and Krug champagne brands, lost 621 million French francs (£64.2 million) in the year to March.

The Asian crisis has hit its largest business, cognac, as Japanese and Chinese drinkers have switched to cheaper brands. Sales crashed by 9.3 per cent.

Remy's already crippling debt grew by another 24 per cent in the year taking it to Fr7.8 billion and giving the group a frightening 200 per cent gearing.

Its compatriot rival, Pernod Ricard, has been tipped as a potential bidder. Any change needs the backing of the founding Hériard Dubreuil family which owns 55.2 per cent of the shares.

Remy also incurred a charge of Fr383 million to extract itself from futures contracts in which it bet that the dollar would fall. These have become punitive as the dollar has strengthened.



Remy hinted earlier this year that it might be forced to take on a distribution partner in an effort to revive its financial standing.

Shares rose 3.4 per cent to Fr120.5, possibly in the expectation that predators in the drinks industry will begin to gather. Executives have already said they want to sell more than Fr1 billion of assets to reduce debts.

The French company was described as in a "critical" position by one analyst. The loss was the first since the group was formed when the family-owned E. Remy Martin merged with Cointreau.

Disney logs up megaweb stake

Mark Tran in New York and Roger Cowe

THE Walt Disney Company yesterday agreed to buy a 43 per cent stake in Infoseek, an Internet search engine, in the latest move by an established media company to create a "portal", or a virtual community on the Internet.

The deal forms a combined Internet company that ties together the resources of Infoseek, Disney and Starwave — a leading designer and operator of web sites for other companies. The new entity, which will continue to be called Infoseek, will be one of the Internet's most popular search and directory services, with the fifth largest number of users.

Interest in portals intensifed last week when NBC Television, a division of General Electric, one of America's largest conglomerates, paid $32 million (£19.8 million) for a minority investment in Internet media firm CNET and its Snap! directory service. Snap! had been considered a marginal participant in Internet directory services, dominated by companies like Yahoo and Excite. These Internet search engines are transforming themselves into more than just directories. They are creating portals or megaweb sites designed to fulfil people's every online need from browsing and shopping to playing and chatting.

It is not only the Internet portals that are attracting attention. Shares in Internet providers surged this week after America Online, the largest online service in the US, rebuffed a takeover bid by AT&T, the telecommunications giant.

AOL spurned AT&T's buyout offer, but has expressed its eagerness to "establish alliances with a wide range of telecommunications, media and technology companies".

The interest in Internet companies comes with the growing belief that the web could transform daily life.

● Internet shopping is set to boom in Europe, says Euromonitor, the market research company, in its report Retail Trade International, published yesterday. "Internet shopping is the future and it is arriving very rapidly," said Jane Westgarth, author of the study. Other experts are more sceptical about the web's potential.

Boeing raises stakes in battle with Airbus

David Gow

BOEING yesterday raised the stakes in its battle with Airbus for global supremacy in airliners by dismissing its European rival's plans for a superjumbo jet as "too late, too risky".

The world's biggest civil aviation company said the world jetliner fleet would more than double over next 20 years to 26,200, with 17,000 new planes worth $750 billion delivered.

But Boeing, of Seattle, said in its annual market outlook that demand for bigger jets, like Airbus's planned 550-seater A3XX, would be small over the next two decades.

Bruce Dennis, vice-president of marketing, said the projected requirement for aircraft of 500 seats or more would amount to 425 before 2017, against the 1,300 estimated by Airbus, the four-nation consortium of British Aerospace, France's Aerospatiale, Germany's Dasa and Spain's Casa.

"They've already revised their estimates downwards," Mr Dennis told simultaneous news conferences in New York, London and Berlin. "Only time will tell who's right, but we think that large aeroplanes will provide just six per cent of the market in the next 20 years — and, of that, more than half will be supplied by 400-500-seaters."

Boeing said that only in the next millennium, when most major intercontinental routes had a daily service and airport capacity problems were more severe, would demand grow for very large planes.

Mr Dennis said, however, that the problems of congestion had been exaggerated, with 89 per cent of the growth in air travel coming from more frequent flights on established routes, including those by-passing big airports. Congested airports like Heathrow and Frankfurt might use large jetliners.

Boeing expects the rise in global air travel to average 4.9 per cent a year for two decades despite the immediate effects of the Asian crisis.

Mr Dennis said: "We assume the crisis will be contained within that area and perhaps confined to some countries, not all. Of course, if for some reason that starts to spread out of Asia, all bets are off." He expected the recession to last between 12 and 18 months before historic growth patterns resumed within five years.

News in brief

Saudi prince eyes fashion house

SAUDI Prince Alwaleed bin Talal is in talks to buy a stake in Italian fashion house Gianfranco Ferre. Franco Mattioli, designer Ferre's business partner, is quoted in the Italian weekly Il Mondo as saying that he saw a "70 per cent probability of closing the talks within about 10 days' time".

The Milan-based fashion company is discussing the 250 billion lire (£7 million) sale to the prince of 49 per cent of the controlling stake held by Mattioli and Ferre. Officials at Ferre declined to comment on the talks. — *Bloomberg*

Ginger pulls out

CHRIS Evans' Ginger Media Group has withdrawn as a shareholder from the consortium bidding for the national commercial digital radio licence. The move follows a disagreement with other partners over the structure of the consortium known as Digital One. Instead NTL, the cable TV operator, is to take a shareholding and make a "substantial investment".

Ginger's decision gave rise to speculation last night that it may be discussing alternative ventures in digital radio with Rupert Murdoch's operations. Rival cable operator Telewest said talks between it, its main shareholders and NTL about a possible combination of businesses had ended. — *Chris Barrie*

Blues for Jazz

GOLDEN Rose Communications, which operates the Jazz FM radio stations in London and the North-West, is looking for a partner and extra financing. The group turned in half-year operating losses up from £566,000 to £723,000 on turnover 16 per cent higher of £1.6 million. The company blamed the costs of an advertising campaign. It said the prospects for radio advertising remained strong, and that higher revenues from the stations were expected. — *Chris Barrie*

Sketchley shares down

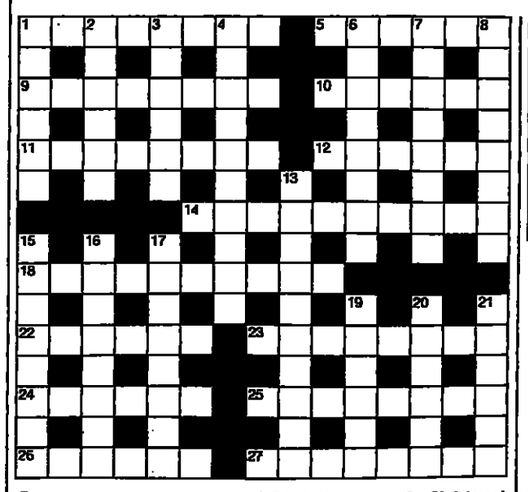
SHARES in Sketchley fell 10 per cent to 37p after the group said talks with a potential bidder had ended with no firm proposal. But it is still involved in discussions to sell its dry cleaning and SupaSnaps businesses. These sales, said to be for about £10 million, would leave it with a cable-laying business acquired last year. Sketchley first announced it had been approached on January 9 but did not name the company. The City speculated it was the Minit group. — *Tony May*

Pilots in strike vote

A STRIKE ballot among pilots employed by British Midland threatens the company's services during the summer, it emerged last night. Talks between BM and the pilots' union, Balpa, on a new pay and conditions package have broken down, and a 4-1 majority in favour of strike action is expected in a ballot of BM's 400 pilots to be announced next week. — *Keith Harper*

Guardian Crossword No 21,305

Set by Crispa



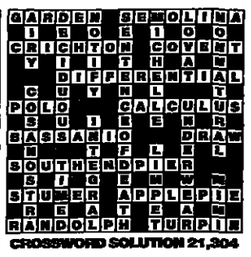
Across

1 Report setting of the French copy beside English (8)
5 Takes up commercial post with organisation (6)
9 Harangue but render assistance to backward people (8)
10 Courage given by drink? (6)
11 Means to see notes about the old-fashioned girl (8)
12 Such a story makes a member object (6)
14 Not against development where there is none (10)
18 "Baddies" in the main (10)
22 The musician's long held this (6)
23 A type of hormone that builds a heavenly body (8)
24 Each will take a portion (6)
25 Cashier having underworld role (8)
26 It's the country for Christmas! (6)
27 Swiss nincompoops holding archdeacon back (8)

Down

1 Old birds swindle dupes (6)
2 Stopped wearing corsets (6)
3 Men with guns count — but not often (6)
4 Rest a bit by mistake and she'll certainly mind! (4-6)
6 Passes on article about a person of some authority, a bishop (8)
7 Deplorable way to call for retirement (8)
8 Heartless fool terminating disbursement (8)
13 Awful gags serve to keep one fighting (10)
15 A summary might well be appropriate (8)
16 Look at a range that's less lavish (8)
17 Parcel it out, though there's just a morsel (8)
19 Building going ahead (6)
20 A writer about bizarre hairdressing (6)
21 Hold on — not all are glad her earnings are so high (6)

Solution tomorrow



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,304

If Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0891 338 228. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Service supplied by ATS

Meacher instructs firms to volunteer for clean-up

Roger Cowe

THE Government yesterday challenged business to come up with ways to cut waste, energy use and pollution, and threatened regulation and taxes if a voluntary approach fails.

Each sector of industry is to be asked to develop a strategy for sustainability to include targets for reducing transport, energy and water use, and cutting pollution to air and water. Publishing a consultation paper, Sustainable Business, the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, said the developed world could not carry on with practices like using 11 tonnes of raw material to produce one tonne of useful product.

The minister said better solutions would be developed by businesses themselves rather than being imposed by government. He said he had already asked the chemicals industry to aim for a 30 per cent reduction in emissions instead of the 20 per cent the industry had offered.

"We don't have to accept what industry proposes. If we don't like the standards which are proposed we are going to have to consider tougher measures", Mr Meacher said.

The Green Paper is to be sent to trade associations and the 31,000 British businesses with more than 100 employees. They are asked to respond to a questionnaire covering a range of social and envoronmental issues, including employment of ethnic groups and ethical trading as well as environmental targets.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.658	Germany 2.886	Malaysia 6.64	Singapore 2.71
Austria 20.38	Greece 490.12	Malta 0.634	South Africa 8.58
Belgium 59.72	Hong Kong 12.53	Netherlands 3.245	Spain 244.05
Canada 2.364	India 69.94	New Zealand 3.13	Sweden 12.92
Cyprus 0.85	Ireland 1.14	Norway 12.28	Switzerland 2.418
Denmark 11.09	Israel 6.08	Portugal 294.60	Turkey 419,910
Finland 8.879	Italy 2,858	Saudi Arabia 6.14	USA 1.619
France 9.887			

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Japan's stitch just in time

Surrender to US causes disquiet

Alex Brummer in Tokyo

THE Japanese government was preparing tough measures last night to restore international confidence in its banking system as part of the reforms demanded by the US to rescue the yen.

Government officials are stitching together a programme to win the support of the Group of Seven which will hold an emergency session in Tokyo tomorrow but the surrender to US demands is causing disquiet inside the Japanese administration.

"The yen rescue signals a reversal of policy by everybody. Now everyone will want to see that Japan carries through with its reforms," said a senior G7 source. Japan is also being urged to push ahead with long-term tax reforms and deregulation of the economy.

The joint US-Japan rescue operation has bought temporary respite for the Japanese authorities. Last night a dollar was buying 137.38 yen, against the 144 yen before the estimated $6 billion (£3.6 billion) rescue.

The American official charged with acting as enforcer of Japanese reforms, the Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, met his Japanese counterparts yesterday but some Japanese investment bankers have questioned President Clinton's motives in taking such a prominent role.

"The action was prompted by criticism from Asian neighbours who didn't like the yen depreciation," an economic adviser to the Japanese government insisted yesterday. "I believe that the criticism is exaggerated. The prosecutor has still to prove the case that a weak yen is harmful to our neighbours."

Some market operators were equally sceptical about the medium term sustainability of the yen recovery and the sudden improvement in Asian markets in general.

In particular there appears to be resentment among Japanese officials that it took the first warnings from China that it was prepared to allow the renminbi to fall — to compensate for a loss of competitiveness with the yen — which forced the US to switch courses before President Clinton's visit to Beijing in July.

At the weekend G7 meeting, Japanese finance minister Hikaru Matsunaga will unveil a three-point strategy.

- The government will take a more aggressive stance to force banks to restructure. This was a condition of the $200 billion assistance released to them in March.
- Disclosure at financial institutions to be improved. Many banks are still thought to be hiding the true extent of the bad loan problem for fear of losing business.
- Tighten banking supervision. A new financial surveillance agency, to be stripped out of the all-powerful Ministry of Finance, is due to be created on Monday.

But the credit rating agencies, which created havoc when they downgraded the South Korean banking sector, took another swipe at some of the biggest names in Tokyo finance yesterday. The debt ratings of the Long Term Credit Bank of Japan were lowered by Moody's as a result of what the agency termed "deteriorating financial fundamentals".

The other leading US credit agency, Standard & Poor's, placed three of Japan's biggest banking empires on credit watch — Sumitomo Trust and Banking, Mitsubishi Trust and Banking and Mitsui Trust and Banking. All have heavy exposure to fragile companies in property and construction.

The G7 will also use tomorrow's meeting to send a message to the rest of the Asia-Pacific region that there should be no "panic responses" to the devaluation of the yen, which has fallen by 50 per cent since 1995.

G7 officials fear that if the message that the US stands behind the yen does not come through clearly there could be another wave of selling pressure which might draw the Philippines and others into the crisis. It is determined to set the stage for global and regional co-operation in solving the Asian problem.



Under control . . . Japan's Ryutaro Hashimoto pledges to clean up loans mess PHOTOGRAPH: SUSUMU TAKAHASHI

Notebook

Seoul banks do too little too late



Edited by Lisa Buckingham

BANK managers in South Korea are not renowned for ruthless decision-making. But having been ticked off for foot-dragging by president Kim Dae-jung they have belatedly pulled the rug from under 55 companies.

Crucially, the list includes 20 subsidiaries of the five most powerful conglomerates, or chaebols, which were in large measure responsible for the financial disaster which has overtaken the country.

Chaebols such as Hyundai, Samsung and Daewoo are household names. But that familiarity has been built by aggressive, debt-driven expansion based on ego and ambition rather than any financial justification.

The fact that Seoul's Financial Supervisory Commission will cut funding to some chaebol units and has said the list could grow is to be welcomed. The companies included are supposed to be those most unlikely to survive even if interest rates fall substantially.

But considering the will-they, won't-they dance of the seven veils which preceded publication of the list, the reality is disappointing.

The targeted chaebol subsidiaries are pretty small fry. There are many much larger and more significant units which are bankrupt and should have been included. Cutting their lifeline will make almost no difference to the underlying viability of the Seoul banking system.

President Kim knows that firm and swift action is needed to stop a further flight of foreign investment which would put even more pressure on the Korean currency, the won.

But yesterday's announcement fell far short of the radical corporate overhaul needed to start rebuilding that confidence.

Does size matter?

BOEING, the world's biggest aerospace company, took to the transatlantic airwaves yesterday to outline its forecast for air passenger growth over the next 20 years.

Its annual current market outlook (CMO) predicts growth of 4.9 per cent — and a staggering 17,650 new jet airliners, worth $1.25 trillion (around £750 billion), to take off.

That means there will be 26,200 planes in total compared with 12,300 in 1997.

But, surprise, surprise, 70 per cent of those new planes will be single-aisle models — just like Boeing's 717, 737 and 757.

The Seattle-based company's CMO sees little or no demand for the planned 550-seater A3XX from an unnamed competitor (alias Airbus Industrie).

But Airbus, the four-nation consortium from Britain, France, Germany and Spain, insists that bigger planes will account for a quarter of the overall market . . . over the next two decades, precisely.

It says they will be needed to deal with congestion, both on the ground and in the skies, and to meet the wishes of customers for space and distance.

Boeing's research indicates that market forces favour frequency rather than size.

Boeing's CMO is widely admired in the industry. Cynics would suggest it is useful ammunition in the battle of the aviation giants.

Boeing is still smarting from last year's market share drop to 55 per cent. And, after all, Boeing is keeping its own door open for a bigger jet — just in case the CMO turns out to be wrong.

Football factor

FOR the third day in a row yesterday, the Office for National Statistics disgorged a scary set of numbers. On top of rising inflation, unemployment and average earnings, it seems we now have a high-street spending boom.

At first glance, it's hard to avoid the conclusion that interest rates will have to go up again.

That was certainly the consensus in the City.

But just as with the inflation and earnings numbers, which were distorted by an erratic bounce in seasonal food prices and one-off bonuses, there is a health warning to go with the retail sales figures.

A significant part of the admittedly large 1.7 per cent increase in sales volumes between April and May was due to the warm weather, which sent everyone out to replenish their summer wardrobes.

However, June's downpours will have nipped that trend in the bud.

An additional factor which will probably send this month's retail sales figures into reverse is the World Cup. Just as the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, kept shoppers at home in September, a national event like the World Cup is likely to lead to a sharp drop in spending in the high street in June and July.

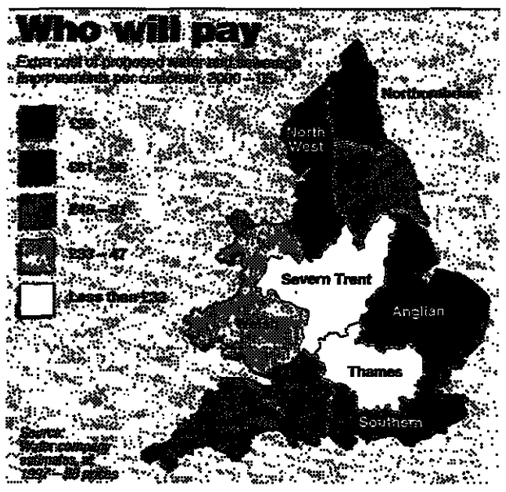
The Bank of England's monetary policy committee is certainly braced for a downturn (TV dinners and booze aside), according to Bank insiders.

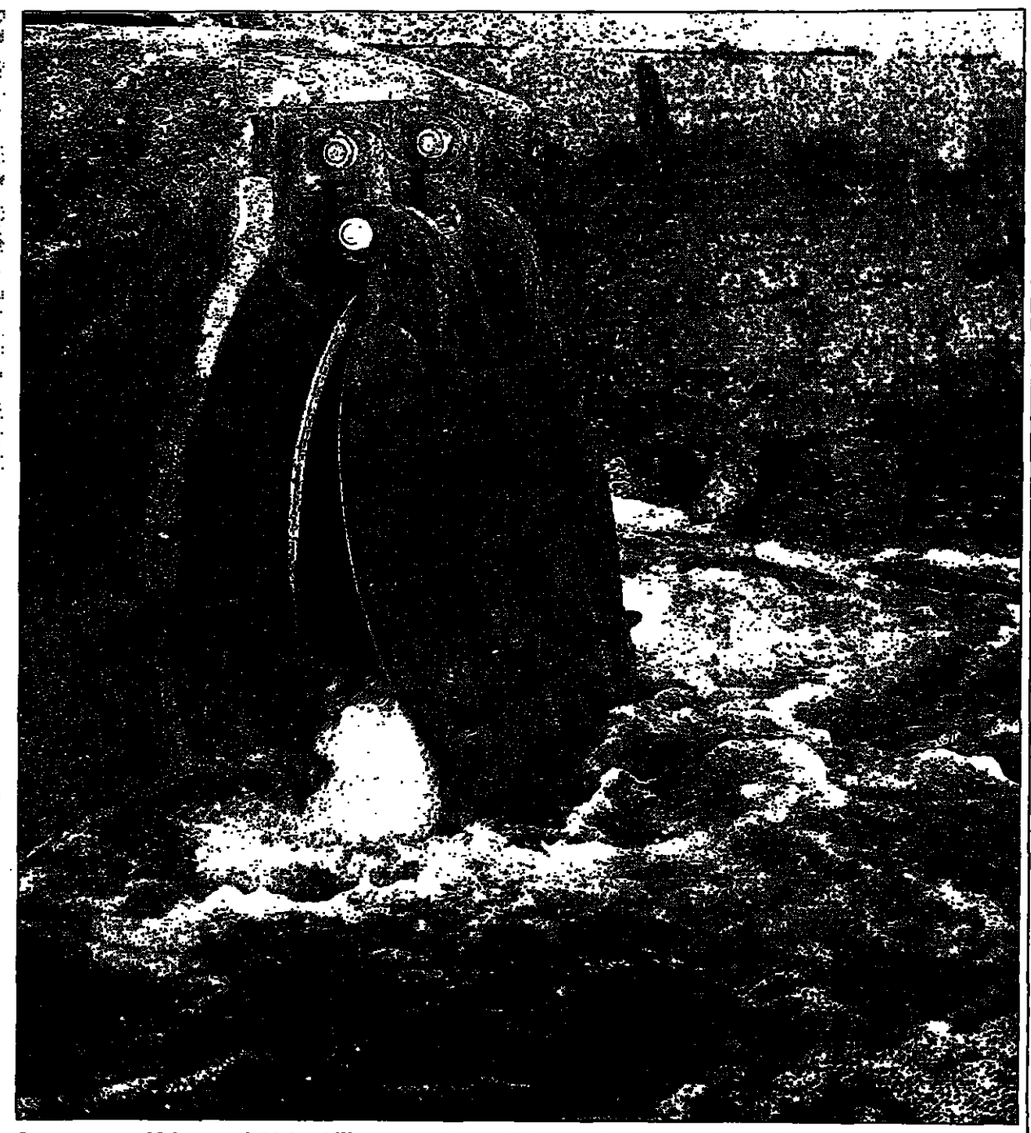
So, once again the message to the monetary policy committee is: don't panic.

The retail sales figures are a notoriously erratic series. Indeed, the ONS says that the underlying trend in May was little changed from April.

Taking the latest three months and comparing them to the previous three reveals an increase of 0.6 per cent, representing modest growth not a runaway boom.

With the cascade of doom from Japan becoming ever more threatening interest rates should still be left on hold.





£46 on water bills for clean-up puts pressure on Prescott

Byatt attacks cost to consumers of environment work proposed by water companies, writes David Gow

Consumers could face much higher bills to cover the capital costs of projects such as tackling outfall pipes pumping contaminated water into the sea PHOTOGRAPH: IAN HARWOOD

WATER consumers could soon be forced to pay £46 or more a year to fund environmental improvements that bring little benefit, Ian Byatt, the industry watchdog, warned yesterday.

Mr Byatt, director general of Ofwat, the water industry regulator, challenged John Prescott, the Environment Secretary, to take a "hard-nosed, cost-effective" look at maximalist proposals to improve the environment and make them more modest, or force consumers to pay more.

Mr Prescott and Ron Davies, the Welsh Secretary, are due to set guidelines next month on at least nine proposals from the Environment Agency (EA), the European Union and MPs, some of which Mr Byatt considers to be of dubious value.

Water and sewerage companies have said the capital costs could be up to £15 billion between 2000 and 2005 and add at least £65 to the average consumer's bill, now £242 a year. But Mr Byatt reckons the maximum cost would be £10.7 billion, or £46 a year for the average consumer.

Adopting a more belligerently pro-consumer approach than usual in presenting Ofwat's annual report, Mr Byatt criticised the EA, accusing it of failing to set priorities or discuss cost-benefits.

But Geoff Mance, the agency's director of waste management, said Mr Byatt was out of touch with public opinion. People were willing to pay more for cleaner beaches, better protection for wildlife and cleaner rivers.

The proposed national environment programme would remove offensive pollution from more than 5,593 miles of river and benefit 100 sites of special scientific interest, he said.

In turn, the watchdog said surveys showed consumers wanted lower bills, with only a third prepared to pay £5-£10 for improved quality. Mr Byatt indicated he would approve spending on nature reserves, but not on forcing companies to treat sewage before discharging it into seas which rapidly disperse it.

Mr Byatt wants consumers to benefit from a one-off cut in their bills in 2000 when a new 5-year price limit takes effect. But yesterday he warned that as little as a quarter of environmental improvements could be met through increased efficiency by water companies during that period and consumers would swiftly pay more. Mr Byatt also wants water consumers, domestic and corporate, to benefit from at least some of the increased competition enjoyed in the gas, electricity and telecoms markets.

More bodies using large amounts of water, including district hospitals, should be allowed to benefit from lower tariffs, provided companies did not pass on the cost to other consumers, and more new entrants should be allowed to use pipelines to supply firms and, ultimately, households.

£10m to highlight pension fiasco

Liz Stuart

THE Government is set to spend £10 million on an advertising campaign to tell people that they may have been mis-sold their pension.

Ironically many are those who were encouraged to buy a pension by the Tory government, which pushed the products with £3 million, high-profile advertising.

Labour's offensive, on television, in the press and leaf-letting houses, will target "phase two" victims — younger people who were wrongly advised to opt out of occupational schemes.

Four London advertising agencies, including Lowe Howard Spink and Bates Dorland — the offspring of BSB Dorland which made the original ads in 1988 — have been shortlisted to draw up creative plans.

The original ads, on television and posters, cost the DHSS £2.2 million — or £3.2 million in today's money — and featured a man in a straight-jacket breaking free from chains, representing poverty in old age and occupational pension schemes.

"The Government introduced personal pensions at the same time as the regulatory regime was changed. Too little thought was given to the implications and a big government advertising campaign for personal pensions was unfortunate," said a spokesman from the Association of British Insurers.

Estimates for compensating the two million people who are thought to have been mis-sold pensions could run as high as £11 million.

This week Helen Liddell, the economic secretary to the Treasury, criticised independent financial advisers for their poor progress in reviewing phase one cases, involving victims who have already retired or even died.

George sees tough times ahead but no recession

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

BANK of England Governor Eddie George gave warning yesterday that the economy could be heading for a period of turbulence but played down fears of recession.

In evidence to the Treasury committee, Mr George said that inflation, which leapt to an underlying rate of 3.2 per cent in May, was likely to remain above the Government's 2.5 per cent target in the short term.

This, he said, was largely due to tax increases in the budget.

At the same time, he said, it was possible that unemployment would rise, bringing stagflation — rising inflation and a lengthening dole queue. But that was not the most likely outcome.

Looking to the future, the Governor said that over the next two years inflation would fall towards the target, although slowing economic growth was likely to mean rising unemployment.

"I see very little likelihood of deflation," Mr George said in answer to a question about the threat to the UK posed by the darkening international scene.

Attending a US-style confirmation hearing, Mr George said that he had received a private assurance from the Government before the June 4 meeting of the monetary policy committee (MPC), when interest rates were raised to 7.5 per cent, that its new spending plans, unveiled last week, would not affect the fiscal outlook over the next two years.

But now that they were public, the MPC would examine them to see if they were likely to have any impact on inflation.

In a statement released after the hearing, David Heathcoat-Amory, shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, accused the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, of keeping the committee in the dark about his plans to loosen the reins on public spending.

He said that the Governor "must have been amazed when the Chancellor announced that, starting in April 1999, public spending is to rise faster than any of the plans set out in the last Budget . . .

"Monetary and fiscal policy are now pulling in opposite directions".

A member of the MPC, DeAnne Julius, who voted for an interest rate cut at June's meeting, told the committee that she had done so because she thought there was spare capacity left in the economy which would keep inflationary pressures at bay.

She also though that interest rates were too high for the stage of the economic cycle.



'I do think activity will and needs to slow down and I do think it's likely unemployment will rise and I do think inflation will remain higher in the short run but will come down to 2.5 per cent'

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